Mystery of the Ghent Altarpiece

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Saturday Review

March 4, 1978

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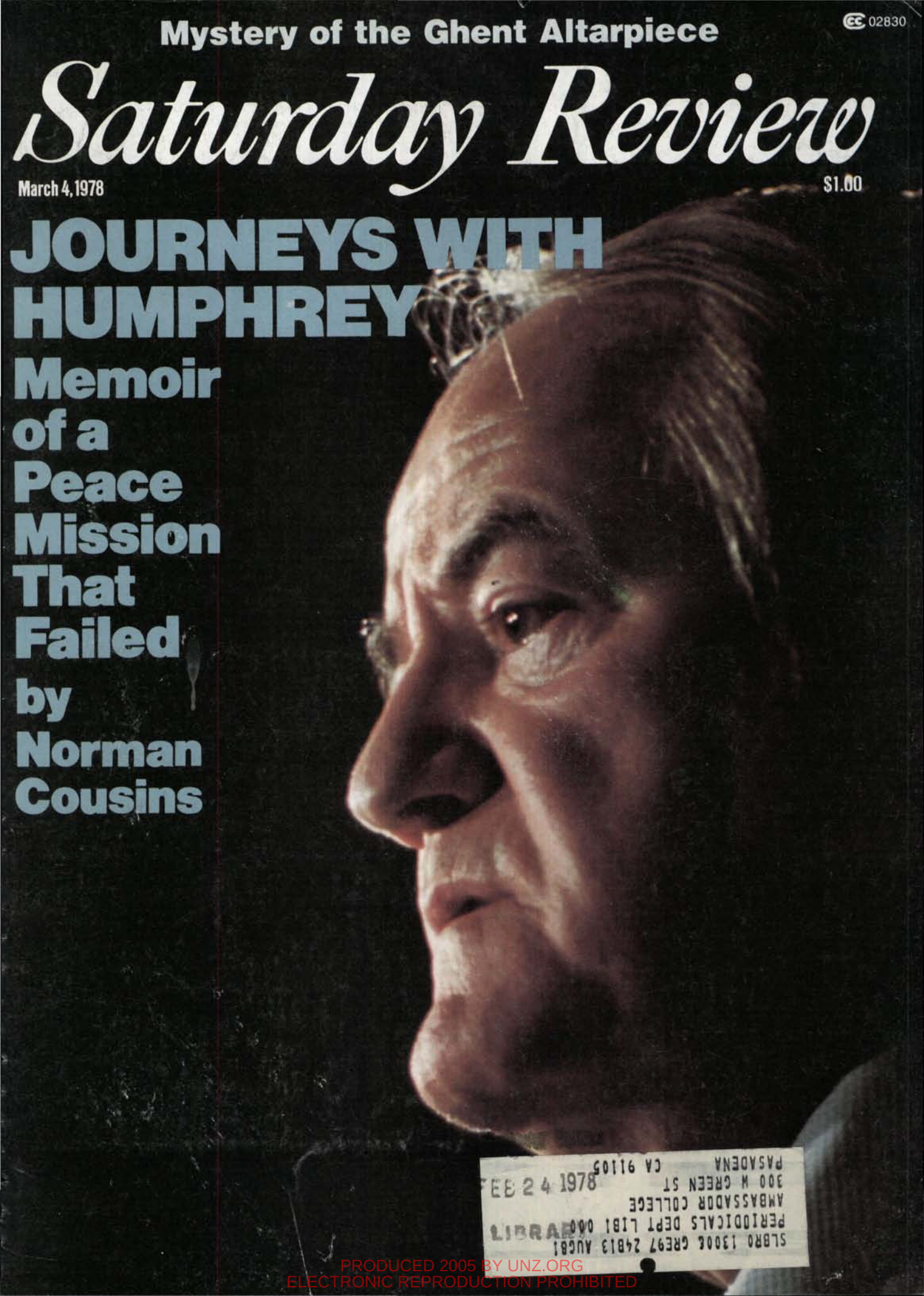
JOURNEYS WITH HUMPHREY

Memoir of a Peace Mission That Failed

by Norman Cousins



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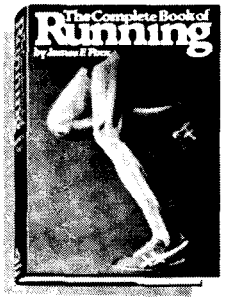

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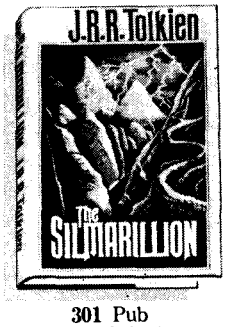

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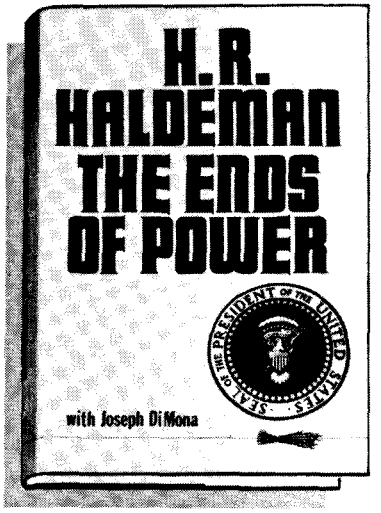

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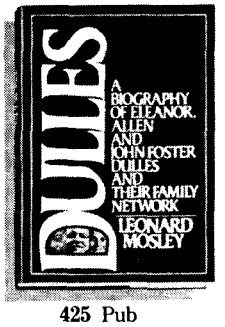

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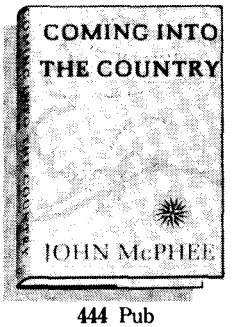

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Business and the rational mind, Part I

Surviving in a complex world•The slot machine theory•Strengths, frailties, and shared water

As one of the world's largest industrial organizations, we know we can retain our franchise to do business around the world only as long as the job we do is effective, useful, and important in serving people's needs. And only as long as people realize this.

We have to be sensitively concerned with society's problems and hopes, even if only in our own self-interest, because we are intricately involved in the complexities of this increasingly complex world. And we learned a long time ago that the success of a company depends in part on factors that don't appear in the balance sheet.

We believe the United States has entered a period in which people will increasingly want to know more about a corporation than just the quality of its products and services. We believe that more and more people are going to want to know something of the value patterns and basic convictions of the individuals who run a corporation, the individuals who in many ways set the tone for the entire company and who inevitably exert an impact on society.

Which is to say that what people think of a company has a lot to do with whether or not it makes money, or indeed even survives. A company such as ours certainly cannot plead that it exists solely to sell goods and services and to earn a profit. No such company can any longer take for granted even the right to be in business, because that right could be withdrawn any time such action seemed desirable to enough people.

In the words of a former chairman of Mobil, "No business is truly safe unless it serves its customers better than they could serve themselves, persuades them that it is doing so, and retains their goodwill in the process. One can't be too sure how long corporations would retain their present opportunities to operate at a profit if making money were their sole contribution to society."

Mobil tries to be a good employer, a good supplier, a good customer, a good investment, and a socially conscious organization. We try also to be responsive to the aspirations and legitimate needs of minorities and others of the disadvantaged, to environmental problems, and to a host of other concerns. And we would not argue that this is undiluted altruism.

Clearly, however, a corporation labors under severe handicaps in trying to establish itself as a good citizen. The criteria are frequently hazy and subject to sharp differences of opinion among contending groups. There are, and probably always will be, those who find something sinister in the very existence of a large corporation—particularly, we suppose, a large oil company.

Many people view the modern corporation as a glorified slot machine created and operated by glassy-eyed, flint-hearted bankers, lawyers, and technocrats. All this quite naturally plays into the hands of political demagogues, who realize that relatively few of the general public have the information necessary to make value judgments where complex issues of economics and technology are involved.

Since many politicians' concept of infinity extends only to the next election, it is probably unrealistic to expect them to behave otherwise. But this compounds the problems of more-responsible politicians and of businesses that are laboring to persuade the public by concrete example that they are fair, conscientious, public-spirited, and socially desirable.

This is not to argue that all businesses—or any of them, for that matter—are perfect. Far from it. But the individuals who run businesses did not resign from the human race when they became corporate managers. And the individuals who devote themselves in such large measure to denouncing our industrial civilization do not thereby acquire halos. We all have our frailties.

Having said that, we have to add that we are mystified that so many of our critics can forget that we have to breathe the same air they breathe, drink the same water they drink, live in the same towns and cities they live in, enjoy the same beaches they enjoy, and exist in the same society in which they exist. How could we possibly be oblivious to the quality of life or to the aspirations of an upwardly mobile society?

We think the public is ill-served by a situation in which private business and its critics find themselves in a running battle of charge and counter-charge. In our view, our country needs and is entitled to a calmer, more constructive dialogue to delineate more sharply the most productive relationship between business and society. That way, we believe, lies the best hope for the future.

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Saturday Review

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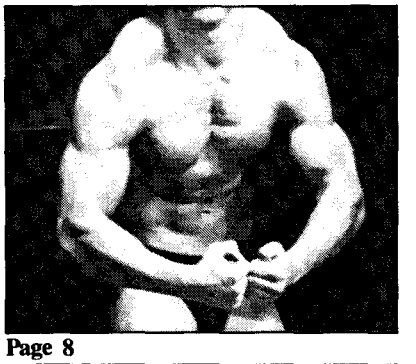

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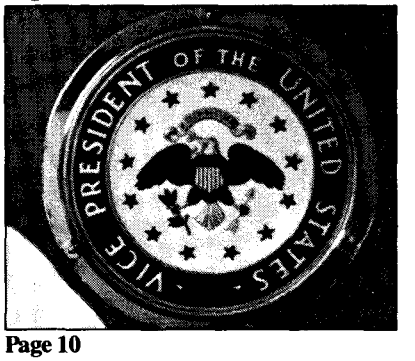

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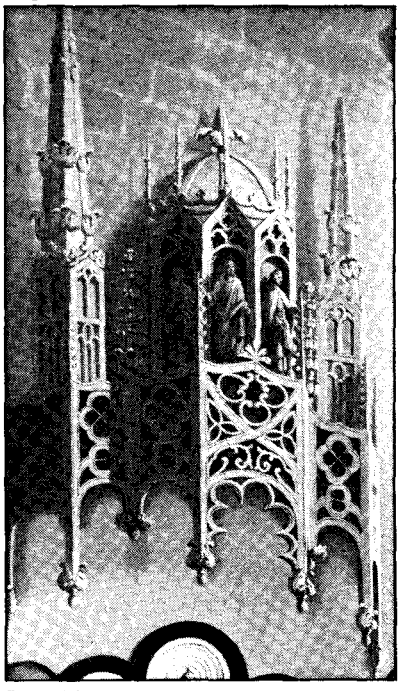

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Letters from Readers

Where There's Smoke, There's Fire

Carll Tucker ["Smoke Signals," January 7] seems to miss the thrust of the no-smoking campaign. Nonsmokers do not wish to protect smokers against themselves; nonsmokers wish to protect themselves against smokers. The pollutants with which smokers fill an enclosed space are breathed by all occupants of that space, be it restaurant, meeting room, or airplane. Airline pilots are not permitted to drink alcoholic beverages prior to or during an assigned flight; yet they are permitted to smoke despite findings that smoking in the small area of a cabin raises the level of carbon monoxide sufficiently to impair their judgment. Nonsmokers' lives as well as smokers' lives are at stake due to the smoking pilot. Perhaps we should insist on nonsmokers' planes with nonsmoking pilots and smokers' planes with smoking pilots. I suspect that if given the facts, many smokers would choose to abstain and take the nonsmokers' flight.

Tucker is correct in his assessment of "freedom"—but only when that freedom does not interfere with the freedom of others, in this case the freedom to breathe uncontaminated air.

Abigail Beutler
Lexington, Mass.

Robert Claiborne ["The Great Health Care Rip-off," January 7] states that Americans spent $140 billion last year on health care. In the same issue, Carll Tucker quotes Surgeon General Julius Richmond as saying that health problems caused by smoking cost $20 billion in 1977. And in the same issue there are two full-page ads for cigarettes.

One of Claiborne's theses is that there are economic incentives for doctors and hospitals to continue the inflationary spiral of health costs. I submit that a major reason for the epidemic of smoking-related diseases and for the costs thereof is that publications like *SR* need the money from cigarette advertising, are glad to get it, and accept it without a blush.

Doctors—perhaps especially ones like myself, whose income derives mainly from operating on people for diseases caused by smoking—laugh contemptuously at Claiborne and at *SR* for publishing such articles and such ads.

I suggest that a society, a Congress, *truly* interested in making a major impact both on health itself and on the cost of health care would immediately impose a complete ban on cigarette advertising. There are other steps to take, which could be discussed at length, but this would be step one.

Before that day arrives, *SR* should voluntarily drop cigarette ads. Those of us who treat these patients see no difference between the cigarette advertiser and the heroin pusher. The former remains legal simply because the tobacco industry has a stronger lobby than the latter.

I do not expect this letter to be published. I expect, instead, an effusive personal communication, suitable for pouring over pancakes, from someone high in the advertising department. This communication will make the following points:

- How gratified *SR* is to know that its columns have stimulated honest and forthright debate on topics of great public importance. It will thank me for my interest in *SR*.
- That the advertising and editorial departments are fiercely and completely independent of each other.
- That in the name of the freedom of speech and of the press, *SR* accepts all ads except those that are obscene or frankly misleading.
- That there is no law prohibiting the advertising of cigarettes.
- That the mature adult, suitably warned of the dangers, should have the right to decide for himself whether or not he wishes to smoke.

I possess one of the world's finest collections of such letters. *Time*. The old *Life*. *The New York Times*. Even *Ms.*: when I tried to appeal to what I thought was a basic interest in the welfare of women, no sale. I received the reply, "The mature woman, suitably warned ..."

Dr. George Gitlitz
Binghamton, N.Y.

Carll Tucker replies: Every freedom "interferes" with some other freedom. The freedom to talk in a given place interferes with the right to silence in the same place. The freedom to belong to an exclusive club interferes with the freedom of others to join that club. The freedom of smokers interferes with the freedom of nonsmokers, and vice versa.

The issue is not whether freedoms interfere with each other but how to balance freedoms in the public interest. Of course, there are as many versions of "the public interest" as there are citizens. My own bias is against any law that, however desirable, is strictly unnecessary. In the space of a few short paragraphs, Beutler and Gitlitz recommend several new laws. What I ask of these laws is not "Would they be good for us?" but "Can we live without them?"

Democracy is a messy, complicated, frustrating form of government that requires of each of us sacrifices we would prefer not to make. But consider the alternative.

Dr. Gitlitz's prediction of my response to his letter is right on target, so I'll refrain from adding it to his collection.

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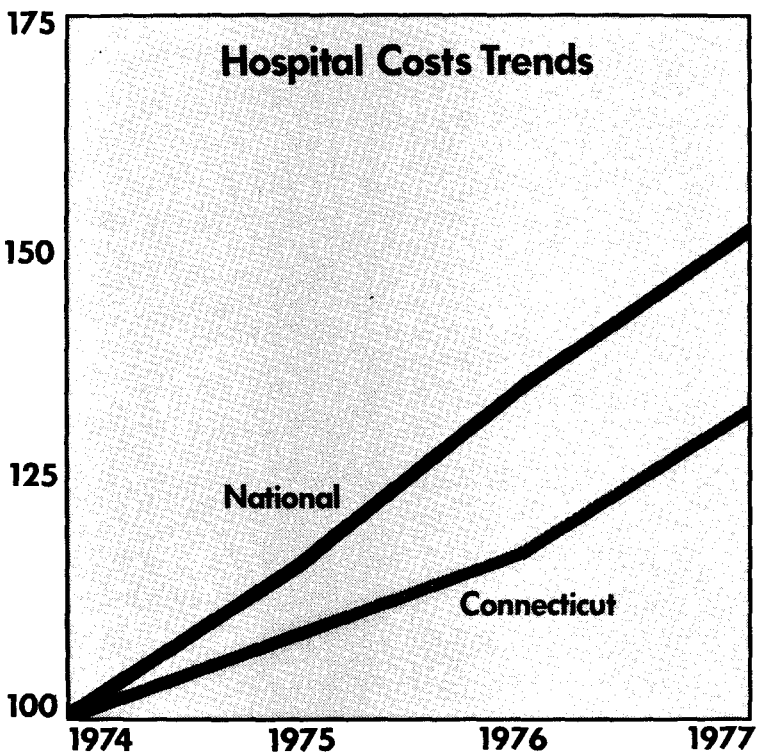

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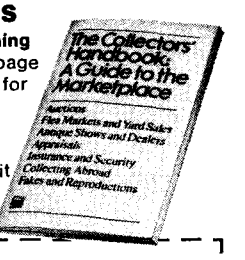

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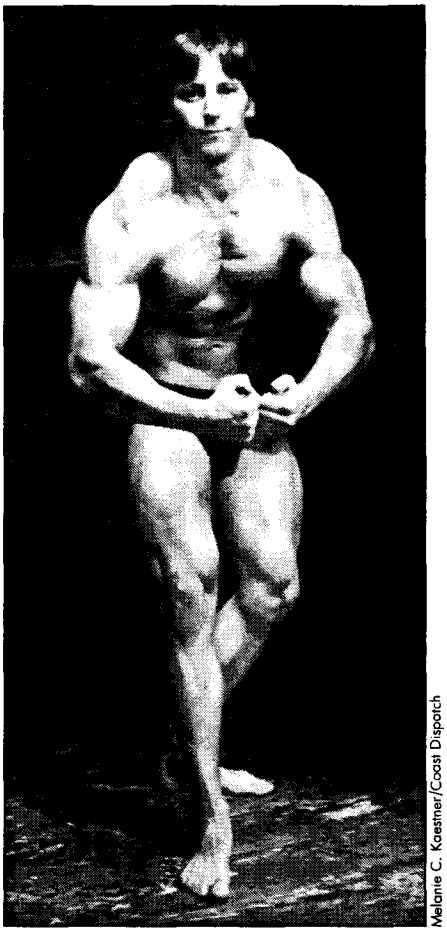
Front Runners

Shocking Secrets

Do you want muscles that bulge and ripple? In a *Coast Dispatch* article, Melanie Kaestner reveals the training secret confided to her by Jim Yasenchok, Teenage Mr. America: First, his coach ties the youngster's arms and legs to the heavy weights that he trains with. Then, when Yasenchok "reaches the point where he thinks he can't go on [lifting], the trainer sticks him with a [20,000-volt] electric cattle prod, sending shocks through his body that... make one hundred additional lifts seem like nothing in comparison."

Just before each contest, Teenage Mr. America also "takes anabolic steroids under a doctor's supervision" and meditates so as to visualize "pre-pictures" of how he'll perform during the contest. "When I won [my title]," Yasenchok says, "all the crying and yelling and trying to kick the trainer was worth it."

Now Yasenchok's goal of goals is to become Mr. America within the next five years—a piece of news that should make the local electric power companies happy.



Melanie C. Kaestner/Coast Dispatch

Jews and Quotas

Things look bleak for Soviet Jews who want a college education. In just seven years the number of Jews in Soviet colleges and graduate schools has dropped by upwards of 40 percent—from about 112,000 to about 67,000—and the plunge shows no sign of bottoming out.

According to Dr. William Korey of B'nai B'rith, the decline clearly dates from the appearance in 1968 of a para-official article written by the leading Polish Communist theoretician, Andrzej Werblan. The article argued that the "concentration" of Jews in universities and other cultural institutions had created a "bad political atmosphere." Werblan called for "correction of the irregular ethnic composition" found in higher education.

Andrei Sakharov, the noted Soviet physicist and dissenter, promptly denounced the Werblan thesis as "disgraceful... backsliding" toward anti-Semitic discrimination. But the anti-Jewish campaign in education was already under way, complete with calls for enrollment figures limited to the percentage each nationality represented within the total Soviet population.

By this reckoning, the present plunge should plateau out at 40,000 students—a number corresponding to the percentage of Jews in the USSR. But Korey points out that at least three major Soviet universities are already verging on zero registration of Jews and that a similar trend is evident in the universities generally. Korey feels this development portends the hardest of times ahead—not only for Jewish students but for all of Soviet Jewry.

Bargain Day

Menu listing at the Italian Pavilion, one of New York City's classier restaurants: "London Broiled with Mushroom Sauce... $7." Why, Manhattan Island cost $24, and that was uncooked.

Atten... shun!

Violence in the schools is a major problem in America, but in Nigeria they know how to order these things: They call in the army. As the magazine *To the Point International* tells the story, the Nigerian Army is going to "assist schoolteachers in maintaining discipline... supervising cleanliness, and carrying out any other function assigned to them by the principals of the schools."

Not everyone in Nigeria welcomes this military solution to the problem of school discipline. The head of the Nigerian Union of Teachers has said that a military presence would make for "an unhealthy state of fear and anxiety" among the schoolchildren. Other school spokespeople have suggested alternative approaches designed to shore up the authority of the teachers and to upgrade the quality of physical facilities in the schools.

If troops do end up in the schools' halls and classrooms, the effect of their presence will no doubt be monitored from afar by America's hard-pressed big-city school principals.

Front Runners Submissions

SR will pay readers $25 for any clipping or item accepted for use in Front Runners. We regret that we cannot acknowledge receipt of materials, run by-lines with items, or return unused submissions.
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Front Runners

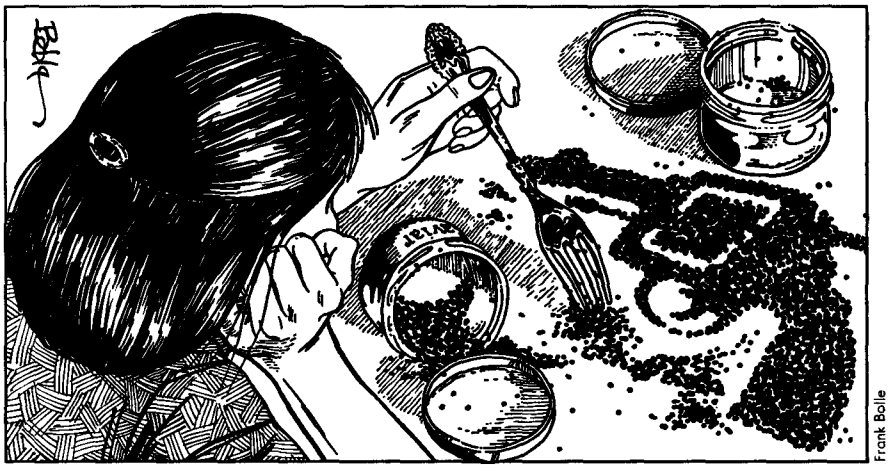
Play It Again, Sancho

Like a Hollywood movie classic being filmed again in a foreign setting, America's nineteenth-century gold rush is currently being reenacted in Brazil—with emeralds. The word is out that paupers can become millionaires if they stumble on an emerald bonanza in the Bahia uplands. As *Financial Times*-UPI writer Matheus Feldhuzen tells the story, "Hordes of adventurers, beggars, ragamuffins, and outcasts [have been] arriving.... They form a new army of diggers called... '*garimperios*.'"

This inrush of fortune seekers has caused excesses—shoot-outs, barroom rumbles, and such—remindful of the 1890s gold rush madness in the Yukon. However, the free-swinging lawlessness has lately been toned down somewhat by the advent of scientific mining techniques and the staider life-style they call for. But life in Bahia's emerald-mining country is still, says Feldhuzen, plenty hectic: "On Saturday nights the saloons are full... and the *garimperios* drink and discuss money, emeralds, crime, and women. They firmly believe that tomorrow, or maybe the next day, the world will be theirs."

Embarrassing Bind

The black mayor of Los Angeles, Tom Bradley, has a problem. It seems that three city employees' retirement systems have sunk $137 million of their total fund of $563 million into corporations that invest heavily in South Africa and in Rhodesia. Mayor Bradley, abashed by these revelations, is reported to be taking a moderate line for the time being, for fear that any hasty withdrawal of investments might cause losses to the retirement systems and job losses among South African blacks. Bradley has, however, asked the pension groups to review their policies and to ponder ways of using economic pressure to better the racial situation in southern Africa.



Frank Bolle

Tired of Caviar

Why is it that so many of the new-breed German terrorists are from well-fixed families? When Susanne Albrecht—implicated in the murder of banker Juergen Ponto, who was a friend of her family's—was asked why she got involved, she gave a flip reply that may have been profounder than she realized: "I am sick and tired of all that caviar."

Legalize My Name

Ellen Cooperman, thirty-one, of Babylon, New York, has had her name legally changed to Ellen Cooperperson. "I did it," said Cooperperson, "because I wanted to show my strong feeling about the sexist nature of our language. I think when you change the language, you change people's attitudes." Cooperperson paid about $350 for her name change. She won't, incidentally, have to change her listing in the phone book: She's been in the book as Cooperperson for three years now.

Ask a Dumb Question...

Recently, the Environmental Protection Agency has been asking various states about their criteria regarding the discharge of pollutants into ocean waters. When Iowa was queried, Assistant Attorney General James Davis responded dryly, "Iowa has not established ocean discharge criteria, since the last area ocean receded from the state about two million years ago."

Olé!

Can bulls really see the color red? Yes, they can, says a Duke University researcher, and they can probably see blue and green besides. This finding rudely upsets the current notion that bulls are color-blind and that they charge the matador's cape not because it is red but because it is rippling and fluttering.

The Duke researcher, Dr. Myron Wolbarsht, arrived at his conclusions while working on a related problem. He had originally set out to test the widespread belief that primates—such as man and monkeys—are the only mammals able to see colors as colors. Experimenting with cats, Wolbarsht and his Duke associates found that the felines' eyes had in fact three kinds of color receptor cells that enabled them to distinguish red, blue, and green. Since cats' eyes are similar in structure to bulls' eyes, Wolbarsht concluded that bulls are also able to see colors.

Yes, but does the bull go for the cape because he hates the color red or because the cape's movements get on his nerves? Wisely, Wolbarsht says, "I'll leave that question to the matadors."

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JOURNEYS WITH HUMPHREY

Memoir of a Peace Mission That Failed

by Norman Cousins

HUBERT HUMPHREY'S LOSS of the presidential election in 1968 was tied to his identification with the Vietnam war policy of Lyndon B. Johnson. What is not generally known is that Humphrey had become disenchanted with the Vietnam war at least two years earlier. He had seen evidence at first hand that the publicly stated policy of the government was not the actual policy.

He had no difficulty in supporting the stated policy, which was that the United States was fighting a limited war in Vietnam in an effort to bring about a non-military settlement and that we were waiting for some sign or signal from Hanoi that it was willing to come to the negotiating table.

The unstated policy, which HHH did not support, was based on the assumption that we could break Hanoi's will to fight. The underlying idea was that if the United States steadily increased the intensity and destructiveness of the war, North Vietnam sooner or later would simply leave the battlefield. No peace maneuvers. No negotiations. Just a de facto return to the situation as it was before the fighting began.

But the situation before the fighting began was that North Vietnam would not accept the unilateral cancellation by South Vietnam of the nationwide elections called for in the Geneva Treaty agreements following the departure of the French from Indochina. Publicly, the United States had been on record for at least 10 years that our basic aim was to put the principle of self-determination to work in Indochina and elsewhere. Yet as President Eisenhower later remarked, we lost our enthusiasm for this principle when it became apparent that the election results in Vietnam would not be to our liking.

Hubert Humphrey believed the key to the entire situation was that North Vietnam felt it had been cheated out of control of a unified Vietnam when the elections were called off. Unless we addressed ourselves effectively to that problem, the war was likely to continue.

In any case, Humphrey in 1968 had become convinced on the basis of accumulating evidence that whatever our public position, President Johnson was not really pursuing the goal of a negotiated peace. Yet as Johnson's lieutenant he did not see how he could disavow the President's position. And though disclosure might improve his own chances, he feared that it might have the effect of deepening the fissures within the United States and of adding to the confusion of how best to end the war.

Humphrey never fudged on the fact that he originally supported the war. As he later said, "I'm not going to pretend that I saw the folly of the war from the start. I didn't. I may be stupid; but I'm not a liar."

Like Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson, Hubert Humphrey had been persuaded by U.S. intelligence reports in the late Fifties that the departure of the French from Indochina had left a power vacuum that would be filled by the Russians or the Chinese or both unless we acted first. And beyond Indochina were the threats to a long string of other countries. The domino theory was not solely the invention of Richard M. Nixon.

What our intelligence reports didn't adequately reflect was the power of separate national histories and traditions. U.S. policy makers had persisted in the notion that communism was an integrated world force—a notion that was badly shaken by the split between the two largest Communist powers in the world. Even more dramatic perhaps is the fighting today between Cambodia and Vietnam, two governments under Communist rule.

Hubert Humphrey never tried to conceal the fact that he had to learn from unfolding events. His position on Indochina in 1958 changed substantially in the next decade. What to do with the information underlying this change was something he couldn't resolve.

I presume to write about the evolution of Humphrey's views on the Vietnam war because I was witness to key events involved in that change. In the July 26, 1969, issue of *Saturday Review*, I wrote about some of those events. But I had not written expressly about Humphrey's role because of his desire not to appear to be seeking restoration in public favor on the basis of previously undisclosed information.

In late December 1965, I was asked to fly to the Far East

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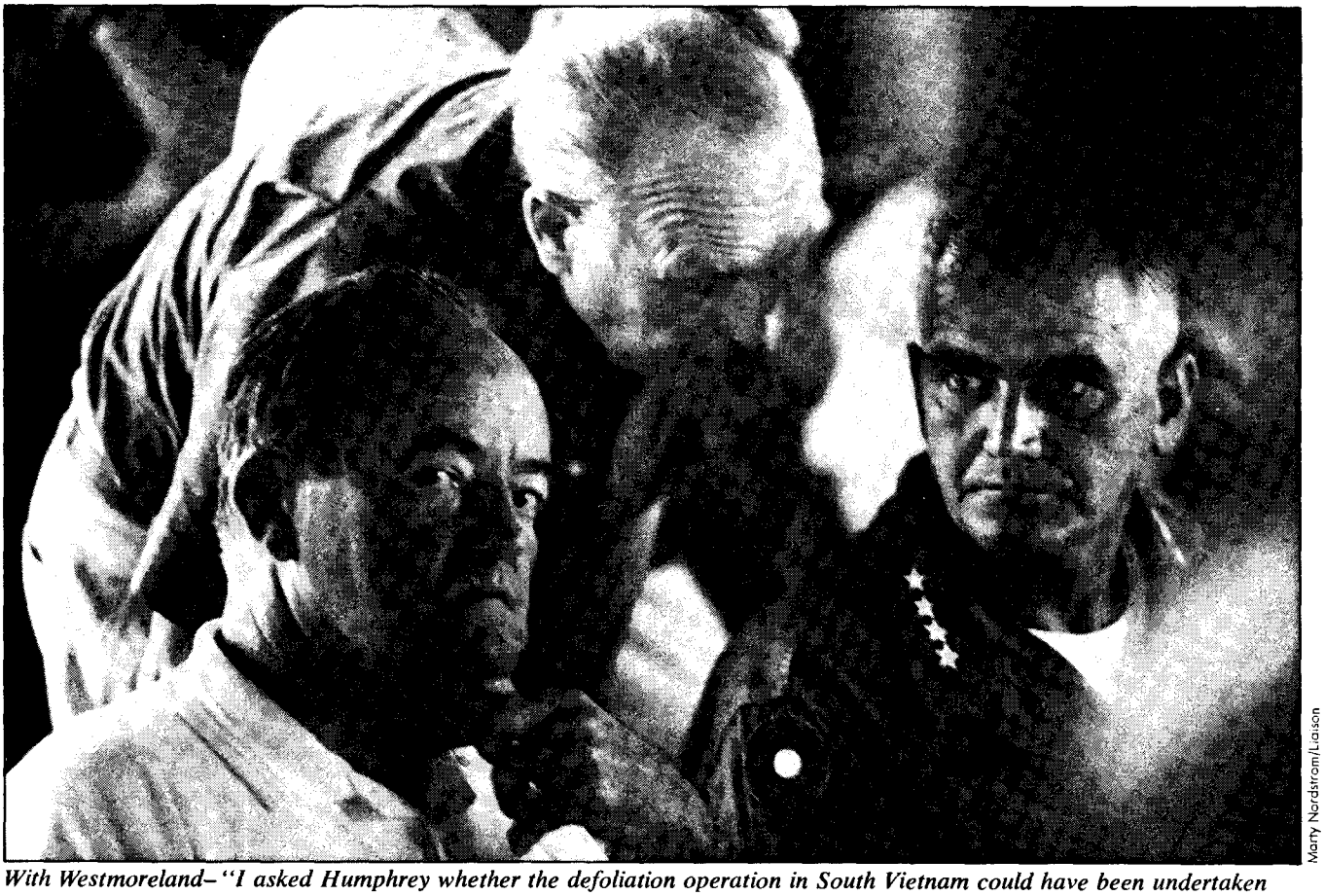

Marty Nordstrom/Liaison

With Westmoreland–"I asked Humphrey whether the defoliation operation in South Vietnam could have been undertaken without the knowledge of the President. He replied that the military was arrogating to itself ever-increasing authority in the war."

with the Vice-President and a small delegation for the purpose of representing the United States at the inauguration of President Ferdinand D. Marcos of the Philippines. The unannounced but primary purpose of our mission while in the Far East, however, was to gain the support of governments in that area for President Johnson's peace strategy. The President had ordered a pause in the bombing of Vietnam in order to strengthen our world credibility as a seeker-of-peace. By indicating our desire for peace, we would create an opportunity for Hanoi to give some sign of its own willingness to come to the peace table. My part in the mission was to find people who had direct access to Hanoi in order to persuade Ho Chi Minh of the good faith of the President in seeking an end to the war.

The other members of the party were Jack Valenti, special assistant to the President; Lloyd Hand, protocol officer of the State Department; and Governor Theodore McKeldin, of Maryland.

The President had made his own plane, Air Force One, available for the trip. The plane was divided into two compartments. In the front was the President's section, with its electronic worldwide communications equipment, desk, and passenger seats (convertible into full-size beds). In the rear was the press section, with six-abreast seating for some 75 correspondents. Our first stop, shortly after midnight, was Anchorage, Alaska, where the temperature was about 20 degrees below zero, Fahrenheit. Humphrey, in shirtsleeves, stood in the open doorway, breathed in deeply, and proclaimed the air cool enough to make a Minnesotan feel welcome. After taking on fuel for the engines and king crabmeat for the members of the expedition, the plane resumed its night flight.

The next morning was Sunday. The Vice-President woke up refreshed and opened an important package that had been picked up for him in Anchorage. It contained the Sunday comic strips. Humphrey gleefully greeted the printed confections and announced that for the next 15 minutes he would be preoccupied with affairs of state.

Later that morning, several of us had a chance to chat with him about President Johnson's order to suspend the bombing in the hope that Hanoi would give some indication, however slight, of a willingness to talk. I told Humphrey that the head of the Japanese World Federalists, Kanichi Nishimura, a Christian minister and member of the Japanese Diet, had recently been in Hanoi, where he had met with Ho Chi Minh. It seemed to me that we ought to seek out Nishimura to ascertain whether he knew anything other than what had been publicly reported.

Humphrey suggested that it might be a good idea for me to ask Nishimura to make another trip to Hanoi for the purpose of getting an explicit response to President Johnson's proposal.

The Vice-President said that he was sickened by the bombing of Vietnam villages. He saw no military advantage in the air attacks. The more we bombed, the more determined the Vietnamese were to persevere against the American colossus. A year or so earlier, North Vietnam had charged that we were using poisonous chemicals to destroy their crops. Humphrey said he had instinctively reacted against that accusation. He hadn't believed it possible that the United States would en-

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gage in that kind of warfare. When he later learned that the charges were true and that what we had done was euphemistically described as a "test of our enlarged military capability," he was outraged. I asked whether the poisonous chemicals would have been used if he had been President. He squared his jaw and said, "Certainly not." I asked whether the defoliation operation in South Vietnam could have been undertaken without the knowledge of the President. He replied that the military was arrogating to itself ever-increasing authority in the war—and even in the conduct of foreign affairs. He recalled President Eisenhower's warning to the American people about the ascendancy of the military-industrial complex. He said he admired President Eisenhower's courage in making the statement.

The next day we arrived in Tokyo. I had no difficulty in finding the Reverend Nishimura. As the result of his visit to Hanoi, Nishimura believed that the North Vietnamese leader was willing to talk but wasn't sure whether President Johnson really wanted a negotiated end to the war or whether he had ordered a pause in the bombing for propaganda purposes. I told the Reverend Nishimura that the easiest way to test the President's sincerity would be to explore the possibility of talks, even at a low level. I asked the Reverend Nishimura if he would be willing to seek an explicit reaction from Hanoi in the next few days. He agreed to return to Hanoi immediately.

I reported the conversation to the Vice-President that evening. He said he was encouraged and attached the highest importance to Nishimura's mission.

THAT NIGHT we flew to Manila for the inauguration ceremonies, which were to begin in the morning. The Vice-President had a long session with President-elect Marcos, at which he emphasized that the United States intended to stand by its commitments to its friends and allies. At the same time, he said, the United States did not believe that an expansion of the war in Indochina was in anyone's interest, and the President was going to make a determined effort to get Hanoi to the peace table.

At the Inaugural Ball that evening, Hubert was in fine form. He liked to dance; and he and Muriel drew admiring glances from the diplomatic community as they spun around the floor. If I remember correctly, HHH didn't miss a single number. When he danced with Mrs. Marcos, a tall and strikingly attractive woman, he called out to one of the photographers to be sure to send a picture to the newspapers in Minnesota.

From Manila we flew to Seoul, where we visited the U.N.-patrolled zone between the two countries. The Vice-President had meetings with South Korean government leaders. As he had done in Manila, he provided a briefing on President Johnson's policy in Indochina. We stayed in Seoul the better part of two days, at the end of which I telephoned Nishimura in Tokyo and learned that he had just returned from Hanoi. He said he had told Ho Chi Minh that the war was bound to increase in intensity and that the only way of preventing further loss of life was by negotiating a settlement. The pause in the bombing would give both sides a chance to demonstrate their bona fides in arranging for such talks.

Ho Chi Minh agreed. He suggested that the two countries meet in any foreign capital where North Vietnam had a diplomatic mission. Since Poland was a member of the International Control Commission (established at the time of the Geneva agreements), perhaps the Polish government might be the host for the meeting.

Humphrey was elated by the news and said he was certain that President Johnson would be deeply pleased. Even though the Nishimura initiative might lead only to low-level exchanges, Humphrey felt that *any* meeting between the two countries was of the utmost importance. The negotiation process had to start somewhere.

Perhaps I might mention here that, several weeks before our trip, I had spoken to Bohdan Lewandowski, the Polish Ambassador to the United Nations. I had first met Ambassador Lewandowski in connection with a project involving the Ravensbrueck "Lapins," a group of Polish women who involuntarily had been used as guinea pigs by Nazi doctors during the Second World War. The women had been badly crippled by the experiments. The *Saturday Review* had mounted a project to bring them to the United States for surgical and medical treatment. We had also acted suc-

"Up to My Neck in Heroes"

SOME NEWSPAPER columnists thought Hubert Humphrey was a cornball who could never resist playing to the gallery. What they missed was that, though he stayed very close to everyday people, Humphrey could hold his own in any sociological or philosophical or historical exchange with the academicians, of whom he was actually one. His closest friends were people who loved ideas, who could range across world history, and who were concerned about the future. Perhaps more than any government figure of his time, he exemplified Woodrow Wilson's definition of a leader-statesman as someone who had no difficulty in regarding the next generation as a constituency no less deserving of attention than the people who would go to the polls next week.

Woodrow Wilson was one of his heroes. So was Franklin D. Roosevelt. "Come to think of it," he said, "I'm up to my neck in heroes—Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Franklin, Paine, Webster, Clay, Lincoln, William James, Oliver Wendell Holmes. Better not get me started."

Anyone who did not despair of solutions to enormously difficult problems would find him a ready ally. I never got anything but encouragement from him for my advocacy of world federalism. He would speak at our meetings and come to our defense whenever we were accused of being visionaries. He once sent a message to our convention saying that the beginning of all practicality in politics was a vision of things as they ought to be. —N.C.

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cessfully in their behalf in obtaining compensation from the West German government. I had maintained contact with Ambassador Lewandowski over the years. When I saw him in early December, I testified to the good faith of our government in seeking a negotiated settlement. He said he knew that the Polish government would be glad to suggest to Hanoi that it send a representative to Warsaw for the purpose of talking to me informally and unofficially. On our trip to the Far East, I gave the Vice-President a full account of the Lewandowski conversations. In the light of Nishimura's trip, Humphrey said that the Lewandowski connection might be especially helpful.

Our last stop was Taiwan, where we were dined by a very genial Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. The Generalissimo, then seventy-eight, was far more diminutive than his photographs had made him appear. His face was pink, round, and unlined. There was little in the way of serious conversation, but the Generalissimo did manage, very politely, to convey his apprehension that the real purpose of the U.S. fleet in the surrounding waters was not to protect Taiwan against invasion, but to prevent him from going back to the Mainland. Humphrey listened carefully and said he would convey the Generalissimo's comment to the President.

On the flight back to Washington, Humphrey was in a reminiscent mood. Someone asked what he thought was the most satisfying political job in the United States. To our surprise, he said the job of Mayor was the most challenging and rewarding political office in the country.

"There's no other office where you've got more of a chance to do a good job; no other position where you are closer to the people; no other post where so many of the vital elements of government are in your own hands. I don't think I've ever done anything that was more fun than being Mayor of Minneapolis."

"What about the Senate?"

"Next to being Mayor, being a Senator's best. The Senate is the finest deliberative body in the world. I've never known or worked with an abler group anywhere. The Senate is also the best club in the world. I've enjoyed every minute of it."

"And the Presidency?"

"I don't think that this is anything I've got to think about anymore."

He was then only fifty-seven. What made him think time had run out?

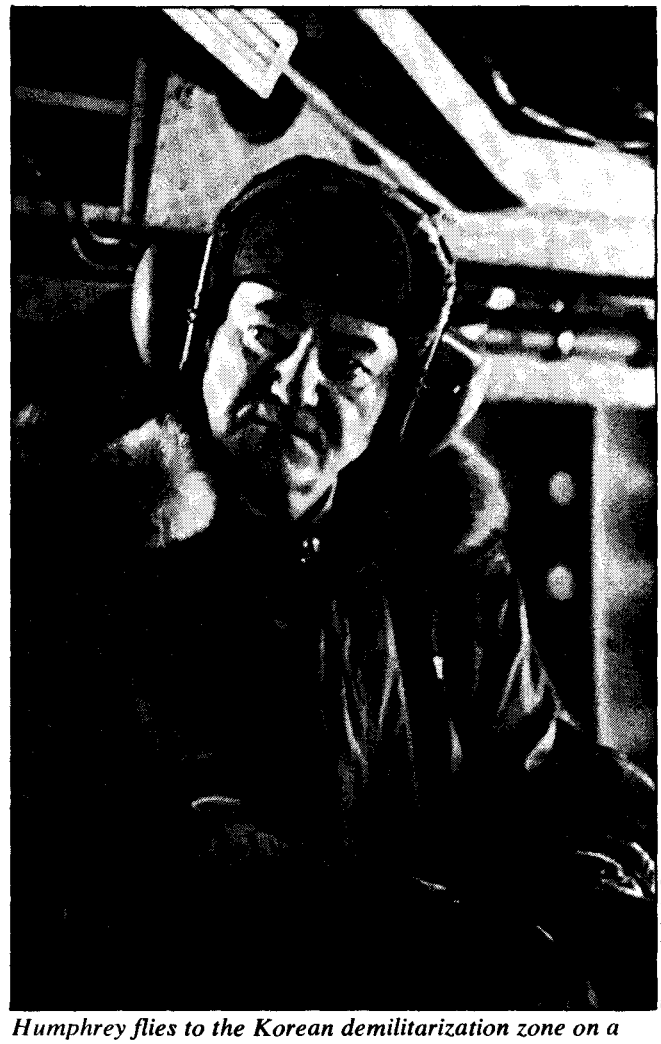
"President Johnson is certainly going to run for re-election. That's that."

WHEN OUR PLANE PUT DOWN at Andrews Air Force Base, near Washington, two White House cars were waiting for us. The President had asked that we come directly to his office. In less than an hour we were seated in the Oval Office. The Vice-President reported in detail on our trip, capital by capital. He asked me to talk about the Nishimura matter.

The President expressed his gratification with this particular development and said he agreed that Poland would be a good broker.

After returning to New York, I met with the Polish Ambassador, who reported that Hanoi would be happy to send a representative to meet with me in Warsaw. February 10 was suggested as a date for the meeting.

I reported the conversation to McGeorge Bundy, the President's special adviser on national security affairs. I also met with Jack Valenti. Out of those meetings came the following plan: I would go to Warsaw and meet with the representative from Hanoi. In my capacity as a private citizen, I would stress the President's sincerity in seeking peace talks. Before leaving, I would be fully briefed on the American position in order to answer questions that might arise in Warsaw. If possible, I would help to set the stage for a formal diplomatic exchange.



Photographs by N. C.

Humphrey flies to the Korean demilitarization zone on a side trip during the Far East peace mission.

From the White House, I went to see HHH in his Senate office. He was exultant about the prospects of the Warsaw meeting. He spoke about the continuing folly of the war. He said it was tearing America apart. He said he could understand why the young people of America were embittered. He would have been disappointed, in fact, if our young people had not responded to the challenge of what they believed were deep moral issues.

At the end of January, I went to Washington for my final White House briefing. While I waited in the Remington Room before seeing McGeorge Bundy, Ambassador Arthur Goldberg came in to talk to me. Ambassador Goldberg had been assigned by the President to the job of coordinating the various peace probes during the bombing pause.

Ambassador Goldberg said there was something I ought to know before I left for Warsaw. Then came the thunderbolt. He revealed that a decision had been made to resume the

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"HHH had the right and perhaps the obligation to declare where he stood on the war and to present his own plan for ending it. If he did not believe in the President's policy, it would be a deception not to say so."

bombing. In fact, the resumption was set for January 31, less than two weeks before the meeting at which I was to try to persuade a Hanoi representative that the United States had interrupted the bombing in order to demonstrate its good faith. If we were looking for any sign, however slight, that Hanoi was willing to talk, why would we start dropping bombs again? Wouldn't the resumption be interpreted as proof that the bombing pause was only a propaganda maneuver? How many more lives would have to be lost on both sides before we could get back on the track of peace talks?

Ambassador Goldberg shook his head sadly. He said he was almost convinced that even as the White House elaborately tried to persuade Ho Chi Minh to talk, there were people in the government who actually hoped Ho Chi Minh would not accept.

I asked whether anything could be done to stop the resumption of the bombing. He said he didn't know.

A few minutes later I spoke to McGeorge Bundy. He confirmed the intention to resume the bombing. As he spoke, he seemed to me to be even more unhappy about the decision than Arthur Goldberg. He felt, nonetheless, that I ought to proceed with my mission. Despite all the evidence to the contrary, it was still a good idea, he said, to try to convince the North Vietnamese that we were fighting a limited war and that the bombing was not to be construed as an indication that we didn't want to get to the peace table.

I told Mac Bundy that I didn't think I could be persuasive under the circumstances. That was the end of the Warsaw project.

An hour or so later, I told HHH of the turn of events. He was aghast and said he would speak to the President in a last-ditch attempt to call off resumption of the bombing. I went back to the Hay Adams Hotel, packed my bags, and took the shuttle to New York. The next day Hubert telephoned to say he had conveyed his strong feelings to the President but doubted that it would do much good.

He was right. Late Sunday evening, January 30, American bombing planes carried out missions against North Vietnam. President Johnson declared that there had been no response from Hanoi to his initiative in halting the bombing. Therefore, the bombing was being resumed. He called on the United Nations to exert all its moral power to bring Hanoi to the peace table.

I had no contact with Hubert Humphrey for the next two or three months. When I did see him, in late April, again in his Senate office, he spoke of the increasing role of the military in the decision-making on Vietnam. The basic strategy, he said, was to increase the pressure day by day until North Vietnam would get the idea that it was pointless and profitless to continue the war.

I asked him whether he saw any basis in logic or reality in this policy.

He saw none and said that North Vietnam probably had the same policy and strategy with respect to the United States.

I asked whether he intended to speak out publicly against the war.

As Vice-President, he said, he was locked in. He wasn't sure that a break with the President would do anything other than to accelerate the fragmentation of America. He said he had to believe that President Johnson, sooner or later, would recognize that Vietnam was a quagmire. Our lack of a moral position was costing us dearly around the globe—if not in the chancelleries, then with the world's peoples. Ironically, he said, he could think of nothing that more weakened our position with respect to world communism than the war. And again, he spoke of the terrible disillusion of our young people because of the government's determination to force a military decision in Vietnam.

Later that year, Hubert Humphrey was to learn about yet another chance for peace in Vietnam that was demolished at the last moment. In November 1966, the Polish government, acting this time at the request of Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge in Saigon, intervened in our behalf in Hanoi and persuaded the North Vietnamese government to agree to peace talks. The Polish Ambassador assured Hanoi that once the negotiations began, the United States would call off the bombing.

Hanoi agreed. A meeting was scheduled for December in Warsaw. On the eve of the talks, however, the bombing of North Vietnam not only was not halted; it was escalated. Hanoi itself was hit despite repeated earlier assurances from the United States that we had no intention of hitting civilian targets. The Warsaw meeting was blown out of the water.

At first, the U.S. State Department denied that the bombing had taken place. After various foreign diplomats announced that their embassies in Hanoi had been hit, the State Department contended that the bombing had been carried out by error. The Polish government was informed that there had been a slipup; that the bombing had taken place without the knowledge of the President. It was said that the decision to bomb had been made by the military under its field authority.

Hanoi was finally persuaded by the Polish representative to reschedule the talks for later in the month. Once again there were assurances of a cessation in the bombing. And once again, on the eve of the scheduled meetings, U.S. bombing planes hit Hanoi, this time in the largest air attack of the war. Hanoi called off the talks. President Johnson declared that the bombings were attributable to pilot error and that he was ordering the military not to bomb within 10 miles of the city.

It was no use. The Polish government withdrew its good offices. There was no way of rescheduling talks. The war was to grind on for another five years before the United States was able to extricate itself—on far less favorable terms than had been possible in 1966.

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At Home on Main Street

ONE DAY in the early Fifties, Hubert Humphrey came to New York in quest of support for civil rights legislation. At lunch, he amazed me with his knowledge of the history of the *Saturday Review*. He said he always had a feeling of hero worship for Christopher Morley, one of *SR*'s founding editors and one of the country's leading essayists and book enthusiasts. Humphrey was curious about the entire New York communications world and confessed he felt overawed by the prominent names in journalism and literature.

I asked him to name his favorite writer. "After the fellows who write the comic strips?" he asked, grinning. I nodded. He named Upton Sinclair, Frank Norris, Edith Wharton, Ellen Glasgow, and John Steinbeck. When I asked about Sinclair Lewis, he smiled wryly and said he hurt all over whenever someone mentioned *Main Street*. He had identified himself with the Midwest folk who were so mercilessly caricatured in Lewis's novel about a Minnesota city.

His father's drugstore could have been a backdrop for a movie version of *Main Street*. People came there not just to get relief for their bunions but to engage in the social life of the community. Hubert loved the drugstore, loved everything about it—the rock candy over which the youngsters would hover with their pennies; the half-empty bottles of cough medicine that people would return for partial refunds when they recovered from their colds; the emergency telephone calls to his father's house in the middle of the night when people couldn't reach their doctors, or the hurried trips to the store at 3:00 A.M. in response to calls from the doctors themselves; being big brother and father-confessor to the kids in the neighborhood.

He saw a human and genuine dimension in the people on whom Sinclair Lewis had laid a curse that went by the name of Babbitt. Hubert could no more deride people than he could avoid returning a smile or accepting an outstretched hand. He would have been the perfect leading character for any play by Oscar Hammerstein; he was in love with the whole human race, and especially that portion of it that lived in the United States. —N.C.

Marty Nordstrom/Liaison

HHH and his father's store—"He loved the drugstore—the rock candy... the emergency phone calls from doctors at 3:00 A.M."

IF HUBERT HUMPHREY had decided to use any of this information in the 1968 campaign, his chances of winning might have been greatly strengthened. Vietnam was the key issue. But Humphrey was fearful of unhinging the position of the United States in the world by revealing that our government had scuttled the very peace talks we proclaimed we were trying to arrange. Turning on his Chief, whatever the political advantage, wasn't in Humphrey's code.

One of the most astounding things about the campaign was the absence of direct communication between the President and the Vice-President. Humphrey's foes spread the word that HHH was taking his orders directly from the White House. Yet the two men became progressively isolated from each other as the campaign proceeded. Johnson read newspaper columns every day urging Humphrey to repudiate the war. He finally sent private word that any break with Administration policy would trigger his own prompt and severe reply. For his part, Humphrey communicated with Johnson through intermediaries, of whom I was one.

Even before the campaign began, Humphrey seemed reluctant to approach the President directly. In March 1968, he

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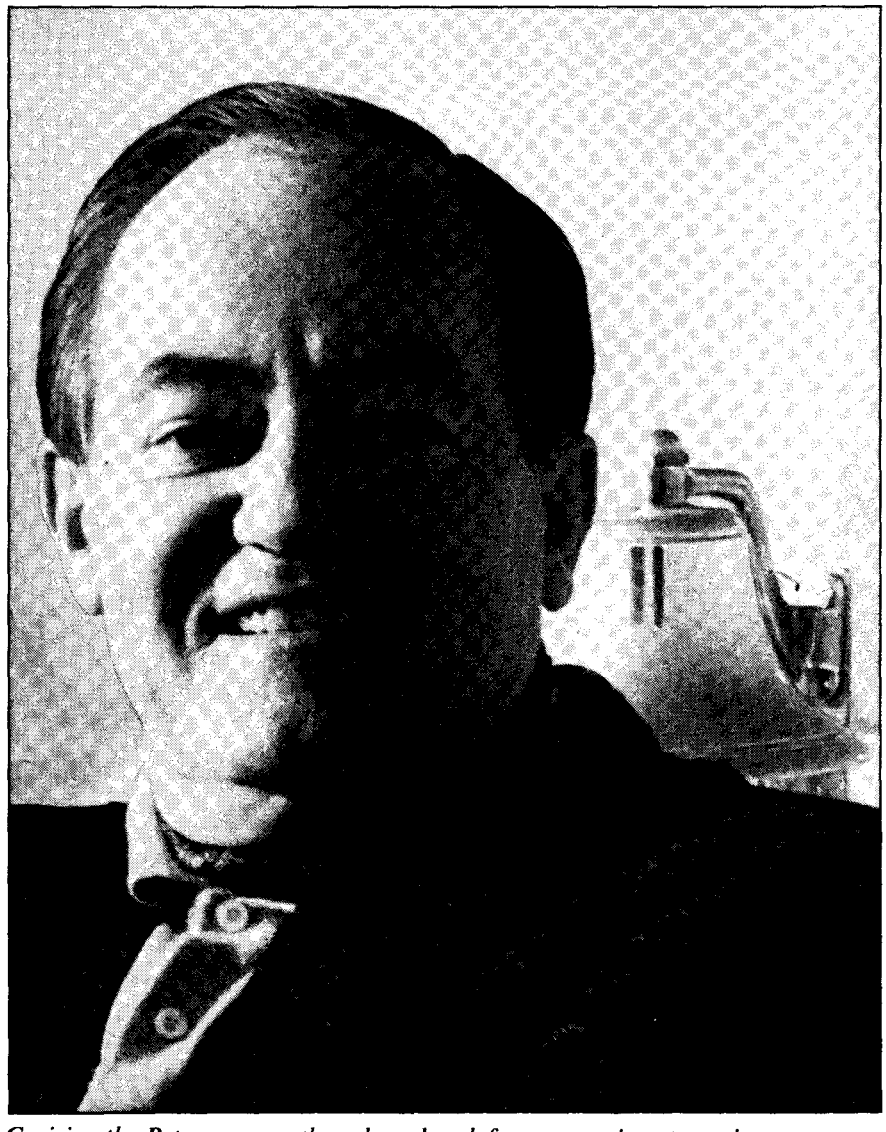

Cruising the Potomac on a three-hour break from campaign strategists—
"Captain, get this thing moving, but not too fast; we're in no hurry to get back."

wanted Johnson to give him one more try to get through to Hanoi. He believed that despite all the sour experiences of the preceding years, Hanoi would come to the peace table, and he had confidence in his own ability to do the necessary engineering.

Humphrey, however, was reluctant to propose himself to Johnson and asked whether, in light of my own previous exchanges, I would be willing to put the suggestion to the President. I had no reason to believe that anything I might say on this subject would be useful, but I said I would be glad to try. Several days later, the White House called to say that an appointment was scheduled with the President at 6:00 P.M. on March 15, 1968.

When I arrived at the White House, I was told that the President was still in session with the National Security Council and was asked to wait in the Remington Room. Every half hour or so, an aide would come in to say that the Council was still in session. Finally, at about 8:45 P.M., the door to the President's office opened and out trudged about a dozen weary men, among them Secretary of State Dean Rusk, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, presidential adviser Clark Clifford, and Walt Rostow, who had succeeded McGeorge Bundy as national security adviser.

I had never seen the President looking so haggard. His tall stature had always been something of a trademark. But now he looked somewhat shrunken. There were deep lines on his face I had never seen before. I suggested to the President that he go upstairs to dinner; I would be glad to come back at a later date. He told me not to be concerned. He was sorry that he had kept me waiting. He explained that the meeting with the National Security Council had started just after lunch and had continued interminably. Vietnam, of course.

I stood up and again told the President that under the circumstances, I would feel more comfortable if he would go to dinner. And again he demurred. He said he understood from Hubert that I thought Hanoi might be willing to talk.

I said I hoped I was not being presumptuous in saying that the real question was not whether Hanoi would accept a negotiated end to the war, but how we could go about convincing

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'It bothered Johnson that he couldn't even get a consensus on Vietnam from his closest advisers. And the entire country was hammering and yammering at him from different sides."

Hanoi that we ourselves believed in a non-military settlement.

The President sat back in the rocking chair that had been brought to the White House by John F. Kennedy. His brow was deeply furrowed; his fist was buried in his cheek. He seemed to shrink in the chair.

"I can't see it," he said finally. "I can't see the evidence that they really want to negotiate. The military intelligence reports I have on my desk talk of a massive Tet offensive. How could they be stepping up the war and seeking peace at the same time?"

I said I wasn't sure the two policies were incompatible. We ourselves had stepped up the bombing even as we proclaimed our desire to end the war by non-military means. In doing so, we expected Hanoi to understand that we were giving them a choice between the sword and the olive branch. Maybe they were using the same approach with us.

"Maybe they are," the President said, "but we don't see any signs that they are trying to do anything except push us out."

His remark seemed to me to set the stage for the suggestion that the Vice-President be sent to the Far East to negotiate directly with the North Vietnamese. Humphrey could cut through a great deal of the complications and confusion. One of the problems in dealing with Hanoi, in fact, had been that much of the communication was being carried on through newspaper headlines.

The President said he had a great deal of faith in Hubert, but he didn't think the North Vietnamese were ready yet for serious negotiations. He said that at his request, the Pope had sent a confidential appeal to Hanoi. Even that didn't do any good. Why would Hubert succeed where Pope Paul had failed?

I suggested that one reason, perhaps, was that the Pope could speak only for himself; Hubert Humphrey would be able to speak for Lyndon Johnson. Another reason was that Hubert would be in a position to answer any questions Hanoi might pose. Still another reason was that Hubert would be engaged in a give-and-take exchange; a letter, even from a Pope, is not quite the same.

Now the President leaned forward in the rocking chair. The furrows in his forehead were like black gashes.

"If I thought it would do any good to send Hubert, I would," he said. "But I honestly don't know whether it would do any good. An hour ago, practically every expert on Vietnam in the government was in this room. We went around and around the same questions. Should we increase the bombing to the point of devastation? Should we fight a limited war? Should we try to bring in the U.N.? There were arguments for every point of view."

I wondered whether there had been any discussion of the prevailing notion that we could force Hanoi to walk away from the war. Was the strategy likely to work?

The President said that the issue concerned not just Vietnam but the entire Far East. If a little country like North Vietnam could succeed in humbling the United States, what would it do to our position in the world?

I asked whether America's position in the world wasn't already seriously damaged by the war. I also wondered about the disintegrating effect the war was having inside the United States.

The President said he didn't blame me for asking these questions, but he had a hunch that if I sat where he sat day after day, I might view the problem differently.

I had no doubt he was right. Even so, it was hard to resist making judgments on the basis of such facts as were available.

He smiled and said he hadn't intended to pull rank or to shush me by saying that only a President knew enough to take positions. But he still felt that Hanoi had no interest in anything except forcing us to withdraw in humiliation.

I reviewed four separate episodes—the U Thant initiative in 1965, in which Adlai Stevenson carried the message to Washington of Hanoi's favorable response to U Thant's proposal for a negotiated peace; the Nishimura mission to Ho Chi Minh in 1966; the two Polish interventions in 1966. Each time the exploratory talks were aborted—not because Hanoi backed down but because each time we found some way of making it impossible for Hanoi to accept.

The President said he appreciated the fact that some people interpreted the war in this light but that he had the responsibility for making decisions in the best interests of the American people. And he again referred to the military intelligence report on the Tet offensive.

WE HAD WANDERED a long way from the original purpose of the meeting. I asked whether, even as a long shot, it might not be a good idea to send the Vice-President to meet with the North Vietnamese. Hubert had a way of approaching people and finding answers that sometimes bordered on the phenomenal.

The President wanted to know why I was so sure the North Vietnamese would even see Humphrey. I said I didn't know that they would, only that it was worth trying to find out. All we had to do was to put the question.

The President said he would think it over. I got up to leave and apologized again for taking his time at the end of a rough day.

At the doorway, the President said that nothing was worse than trying to deal with dead-end situations. It bothered him that he couldn't even get a consensus on Vietnam from his closest advisers. And the entire country was hammering and yammering at him from different sides, all pushing him in conflicting directions.

"Well, as they say, it comes with the territory, and I asked for it," he said laconically.

I had a terrible sense of the ultimate loneliness of the President's job. Some days later, I picked up the morning paper and read that the President had decided to step down at the

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"Humphrey said he understood why the young people were embittered. He would have been disappointed if they had not responded to the challenge of what they believed were deep moral issues."

end of his term. He mentioned his inability to bring the war to an end and thought someone else might have a better chance.

A week or so later, Hubert Humphrey came to New York. We met for dinner in the apartment of a longtime mutual friend, Senator William Benton, publisher of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. (Humphrey and I were fellow members of the Board of Directors of *EB*.) The discussion quickly turned to the implications of the President's announcement. Bill Benton said that Johnson's power to choose a successor was strengthened, if anything. It was doubtful, in fact, whether any Democrat could get elected unless Johnson was wholeheartedly behind him.

Hubert Humphrey said it was a messy situation, and he thought he was better off out of it.

Bill Benton said Hubert had an obligation to run; he was clearly the best man. A way had to be found of getting Johnson's full support.

Humphrey wondered whether such support might be a mixed blessing. No one was going to get the nomination without Johnson's seal of approval, and he wasn't sure whether anyone was likely to get elected with it. Humphrey added that, in any case, his own record of support for the war, so far as the public was concerned, put him in the same vulnerable position that Johnson was in.

I suggested that the situation might be different in at least one vital respect. What the public didn't know was that Humphrey had changed his mind about the war as the result of his trip to the Far East in 1966. Why weren't the American people entitled to know the truth? Why not talk about the sequence of events that led HHH to recognize that most of the policy on Vietnam was being made in the Pentagon? Why not talk about the need for a non-military settlement and be candid about past obstacles to that objective? At the very least, HHH had the right and perhaps the obligation to declare where he stood on the war and to present his own plan for ending it. If HHH did not believe in the President's current policy, it would be a deception not to say so. And since he believed the United States should extricate itself, why not say that, too?

Humphrey had no difficulty in agreeing intellectually with what both Senator Benton and I had said. Emotionally, however, he was incapable of breaking with his Chief. If he had disagreed with the war, he should have resigned. He said he may have overestimated his ability to change things from within. He would come as close as he could to defining a policy of his own during the campaign; but he would not use confidential information for political advantage.

After the campaign got under way, Humphrey's position in the polls plunged from its preconvention high. He was being pilloried by the students as a Fascist murderer of women and children in Vietnam. Some of the same students he had defended because he felt that they were morally right in speaking up were being brutally unfair in their attitude toward him. As he had always done in the past, he would talk to his critics whenever possible, encouraging them to ask questions. But he would not publicly repudiate the government's policy even though he knew the war to be a tragic waste. Indeed, one of his first moves as President would have been to get us out of it.

ONE DAY in the early autumn of 1968, I got a telephone call from HHH. He had the use of a motorboat the next day and invited me down for a spin on the Potomac.

I flew down in the morning. It was a crisp, sunny October day. The "motorboat" was actually a launch, with a spacious outer deck and an attractive cabin. Hubert was in good form. He said he had left his political strategists back at the apartment; so he had at least the next three hours to himself. He put on a sports jacket and stretched his arms. "Can anyone imagine a nicer day?" he sang out. Then, addressing the pilot: "Captain, get this thing moving down the Potomac, but not too fast; we're in no hurry to get back."

Turning to me: "Now if only the Washington Redskins can beat the Dallas Cowboys...."

Humphrey presided over the shipboard barbecue and was his own best customer, proclaiming his pleasure over the viands. There wasn't much talk about the Presidential campaign. After the outing, however, on the way back to his apartment, the subject of the war came up. He said that more important than any detailed plan for getting out of the war was a clear conviction by the American people that getting out was necessary. He believed there was almost nothing the American people couldn't do once they accepted a goal.

In that one sentence was the crystallization of his political philosophy. He believed, first of all, in the need for consensus and, second, in the power of commitment, whether by the individual or the society.

* * *

I will always regret not being at *SR*'s offices on December 21, 1977, when Hubert Humphrey telephoned from his hospital bed in Washington. He left a message with Mary Swift wishing me well at Christmas and for the new year. His voice was strong and cheerful and he chatted easily, giving no sign that he was within a few days of the end.

Mrs. Swift expressed concern for his health. "Don't worry," he said. "I'm a fighter, and I'm going to give it everything I've got."

That afternoon he was taken from Washington to Minnesota. In the next few days his condition deteriorated rapidly. I tried to get through to him by telephone, but he was cut off from all outside communication.

When I read in the newspapers that he had told Muriel he was less interested in mourning and memorial services than in a celebration of life, I could think of nothing more characteristic of Hubert Humphrey. Who could ever forget such a man? ◉

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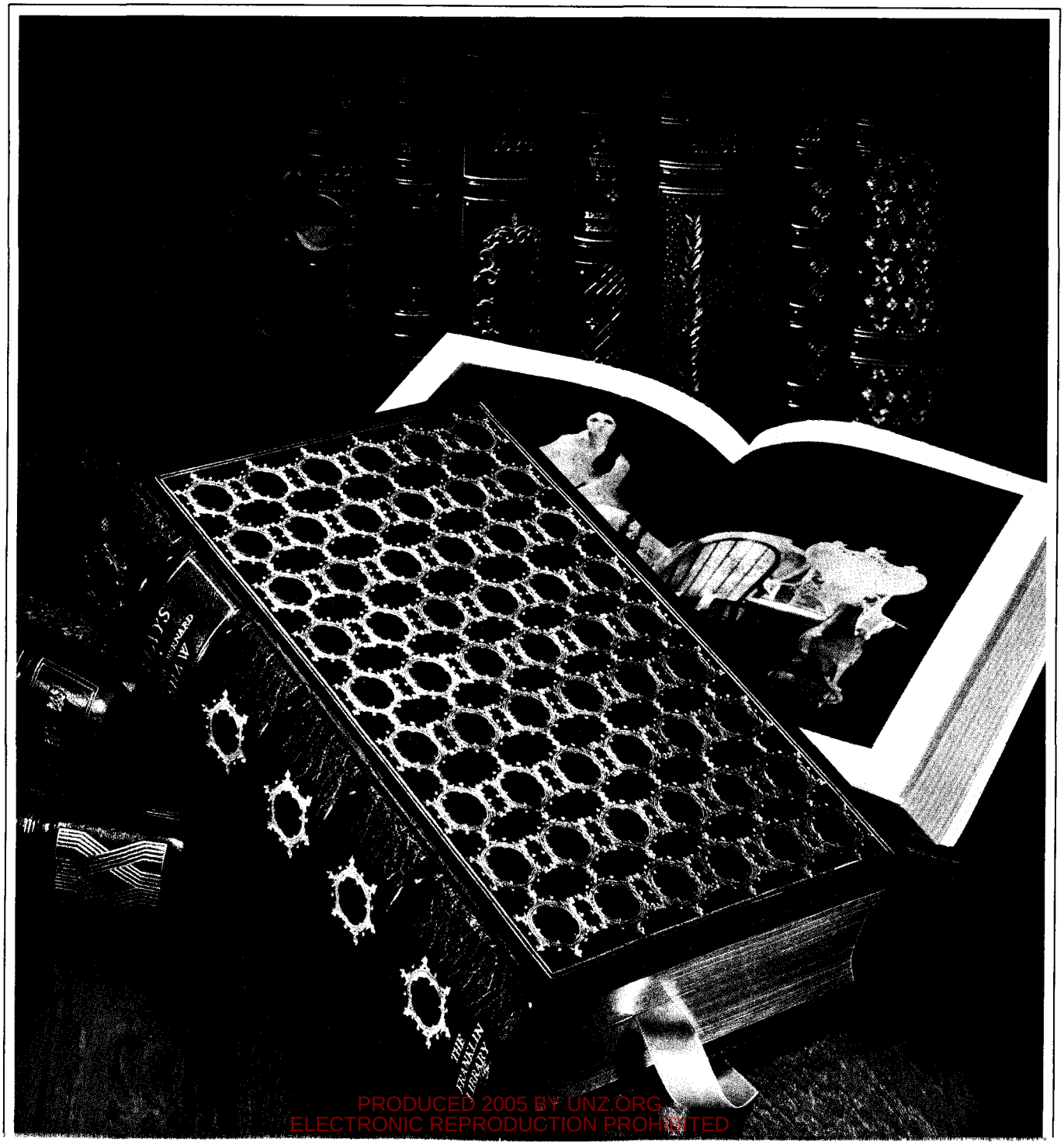

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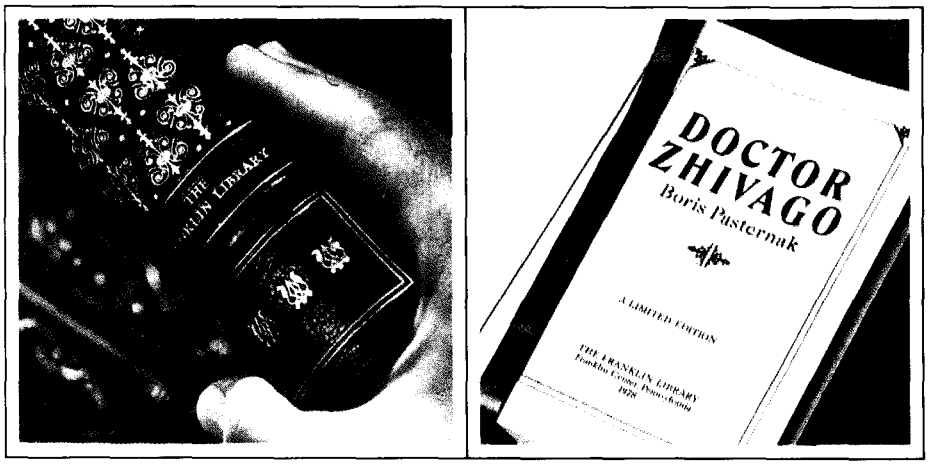

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OUR ALL-TOO-TIMID PRESS

by Tom Wicker

THE FIRST AMENDMENT does not say anything about "responsibility." This observation, which I have offered to hundreds of disbelieving and usually disapproving audiences, invariably brings some challenger to his or her feet with something like the following inquiry (usually varied more in its degree of choler than in wording): "Do you mean to say that the press has a right to be irresponsible?"

I mean to say nothing of the sort, although it's true—just to be argumentative—that irresponsibility does not appear to the layman's eye to be a constitutional violation. But it's just as well for journalists in particular to recall the skeptical judgment in *The Federalist* of Alexander Hamilton—who opposed as unnecessary a Bill of Rights for the Constitution:

> What is the liberty of the press? Who can give it any definition which would not leave the utmost latitude for evasion? I hold it to be impracticable; and from this I infer that its security, whatever fine declarations may be inserted in any constitution respecting it, must altogether depend on public opinion, and on the general spirit of the people and of the government.

Just so. And with that in mind, no journalist should advocate to the public the idea that the press has "a right to be irresponsible"; no one could agree to that. Nor should any journalist wish the press or broadcast news to *be* irresponsible. Aside from their pride in their craft and its institutions, their desire to do their personal work well, and their concern that the public should be informed, all journalists know that popular contempt for and fear of press irresponsibility are as grave threats—and more justified ones—to a free press as are government attempts to silence it. And, as Hamilton foresaw, that part of the First Amendment might not long survive a hostile, determined public opinion.

Granting all that, a certain case for tolerance of irresponsibility still has to be made. That is to say, if the American press is to remain free—even in the somewhat limited sense that necessarily results from the conflict of this freedom with the other equally guaranteed freedoms in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights—it cannot have responsibility imposed on it by legislation, judicial interpretation, or any other process.

Freedom contains within itself the possibility of irresponsibility. No man is truly free who is not permitted occasionally to be irresponsible; nor is any institution. Responsibility, it goes without saying, is profoundly important; and the highest freedom of all may well be the freedom to conduct one's life and affairs responsibly—but by one's own standards of responsibility. It's a mean freedom in which a mere failure of responsibility brings a jail term or a fine or some other societally imposed penalty—and no freedom at all if standards of responsibility are uniform, designed to prevent rather than to punish failures, and set by higher authority.

Yet some of the most sweeping restrictions on the freedom of the press have been proposed in the name of preventing press irresponsibility. What is lost sight of is that if responsibility can be imposed, freedom must be lost; and of those who advocate various means of ensuring the responsibility of a supposedly free press, two questions should be asked:

Who defines responsibility? In numerous instances, the difficulty editors and reporters have in determining a responsible course in disputed circumstances has, I believe, been demonstrated—notably in the case of *The New York Times*'s treatment of the Bay of Pigs story. In literally thousands of other instances—most of them less important but many on the same level of seriousness—editors have no hard-and-fast rules to follow, save those of experience, ethics, and common sense—all of which vary from person to person. Editors may, and often do, differ on what is responsible—even as *Times* editors differed among themselves on handling the Bay of Pigs story. There simply is no certainty, in most instances, as to what constitutes a responsible course in an enormous number of cases that editors and reporters have to face.

Most journalists believe that the multiplicity of editorial decisions likely to result in any given case is a major safeguard against irresponsibility and misinformation. All editors won't make the same decision based on the same set of facts—a story played on page one by the *Times* may be printed inside *The Washington Post*; a quotation in the one story may not appear in the other; different lines of interpretation may well be taken by the two papers and by any number of others, with the result that the same story appears in many versions and with a greater or lesser degree of prominence. This rich diversity not only works against the possibility that any story can be covered up or manufactured but it also offers a reasonable guarantee that differing viewpoints on the same events will reach the public.

Not only, therefore, would the imposition of standards of responsibility on the press move it away from diversity and toward uniformity of presentation but it would require an instrument big enough and comprehensive enough to define responsibility in an immense number of instances, for a huge number of publications and broadcasters. No such instrument exists, save the government.

Who enforces responsibility? This is a simpler problem. Once responsibility is defined, obviously nothing of sufficient power and scope exists to force the defined responsibility on the entire press—again save the government.

Thus, if we are to be *sure* of a responsible press, the only way is through a government that both defines and enforces responsibility. Not just Richard Nixon would have leaped at *that* opportunity. It need scarcely even be pointed out that in such circumstances, the condition of the American press would be a far cry from freedom.

Would that matter?

Obviously, a totally government-con-

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Tom Wicker is a New York Times *columnist. He is the author of seven novels and four nonfiction books.*

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trolled press would make much difference to liberty in America; but that is not what most of those who demand greater press responsibility have in mind. They more often set forth a supposedly middle course—yielding a little freedom in a beneficial trade-off to gain some responsibility.

The middle-course argument is respectable. It cannot be maintained by the most ardent First Amendment advocate that democracy is not reasonably healthy in Britain, where the press is under much greater restraint than it is in the United States. Libel laws that sharply restrict publication and broadcasting; a heavy bias toward privacy rather than publication in laws governing press reports on criminal justice proceedings and other actions of the courts; the Official Secrets Act that governments of both parties frequently invoke, apparently not always in matters of indisputable national security; and the quasi-governmental Press Council to monitor and criticize press activities—have these stifled the larger British democracy? From my side of the Atlantic, I cannot say that they have.

FOR WHATEVER REASONS, the history of British politics is by no means as marked by venality and corruption as is that of the United States, and governing ethics and traditions there appear so settled that serious violations of them—for example, a power grab such as that represented by the Watergate complex of offenses—are far less likely. Secrecy by the British government has been widely accepted for centuries. Profound policy miscalculations—the Suez War, for example—bring quick political retribution, Official Secrets Act or no, while more egregious American blunders in Vietnam and Cambodia for years produced in the United States mostly a "rally-round-the-President" effect, until the press—primarily television—finally turned the public against the war (by printing and broadcasting *news*, not editorials).

Therefore, press restraints perhaps amenable to British democracy—although not many British journalists really consider them so—would not necessarily be fitting in the United States. Should a Watergate occur in the United Kingdom, colleagues in the British press say, the governing party plausibly accused of conniving in the burglary of opposition party headquarters and then of obstructing justice to conceal the crime would soon be turned out of office, despite restrictions on reporting such a story. But it was a challenging American press that kept Watergate in the public eye and ultimately forced the various actions that led to Richard Nixon's resignation—at that, two years after the offense.

But the existence of restrictions on the British press, together with the evident survival of the essential British democracy, leads many serious and reasonable persons to suggest not government control of the American press but similar instruments of responsibility in this country's journalistic practice.

When the Senate in 1977 established an oversight committee for the so-called intelligence community, for example, one of the committee's first studies was of the need, if any, for a limited form of Official Secrets Act in the United States—an effort to protect the CIA from the public rather than the public from the CIA that stood the committee's supposed responsibility on its head.

"No man is truly free who is not permitted occasionally to be irresponsible; nor is any institution."

The discussed act's reach would ostensibly have been limited to barring disclosures of "sources and methods" of gathering intelligence—"ostensibly" because although "sources and methods" describes an arcane art and is a term therefore supposedly capable of being strictly defined and narrowly applied, both the FBI and the CIA have in the past shown themselves capable of slipping large abuses through tiny loopholes. It was, for example, supposedly to protect sources and methods that some of the CIA's mail-opening and surveillance operations were illegally pursued.

Whatever the situation in Britain, in this country—as I hope I have demonstrated—secrecy has too often been used to shield blunders, crimes, and ineptitude. Alert citizens should not accept without sharp questioning a secrecy law designed to give a secret agency even greater powers of covering up its operations than it already has. And unless Congress were to show an uncharacteristic willingness to include a "shield" provision for reporters—which it has never done in other legislation of less importance and which would be of dubious constitutionality—a likely consequence would be about as follows:

The leak of a secret protected by the act would appear as a news story in a newspaper or on a broadcast. An inquiry would be launched; but as usual, the identity of the leaker (who could be prosecuted under the new law) would not be learned. The reporter-recipient of the leak would be subpoenaed to appear before a grand jury and would be asked the identity of his source, with a view to prosecuting the leaker. It would be made clear that no other means existed of obtaining this information vital to enforcement of the Official Secrets Act and the orderly administration of government.

The reporter would abide by his professional code of ethics and would refuse to answer. He would then be held in contempt and ordered to jail—although there might be no evidence of any damage to national security as a consequence of his or her story. A lot of reporters would have a lot of second thoughts—chilling indeed—about accepting leaks of so-called security secrets under such a threat.

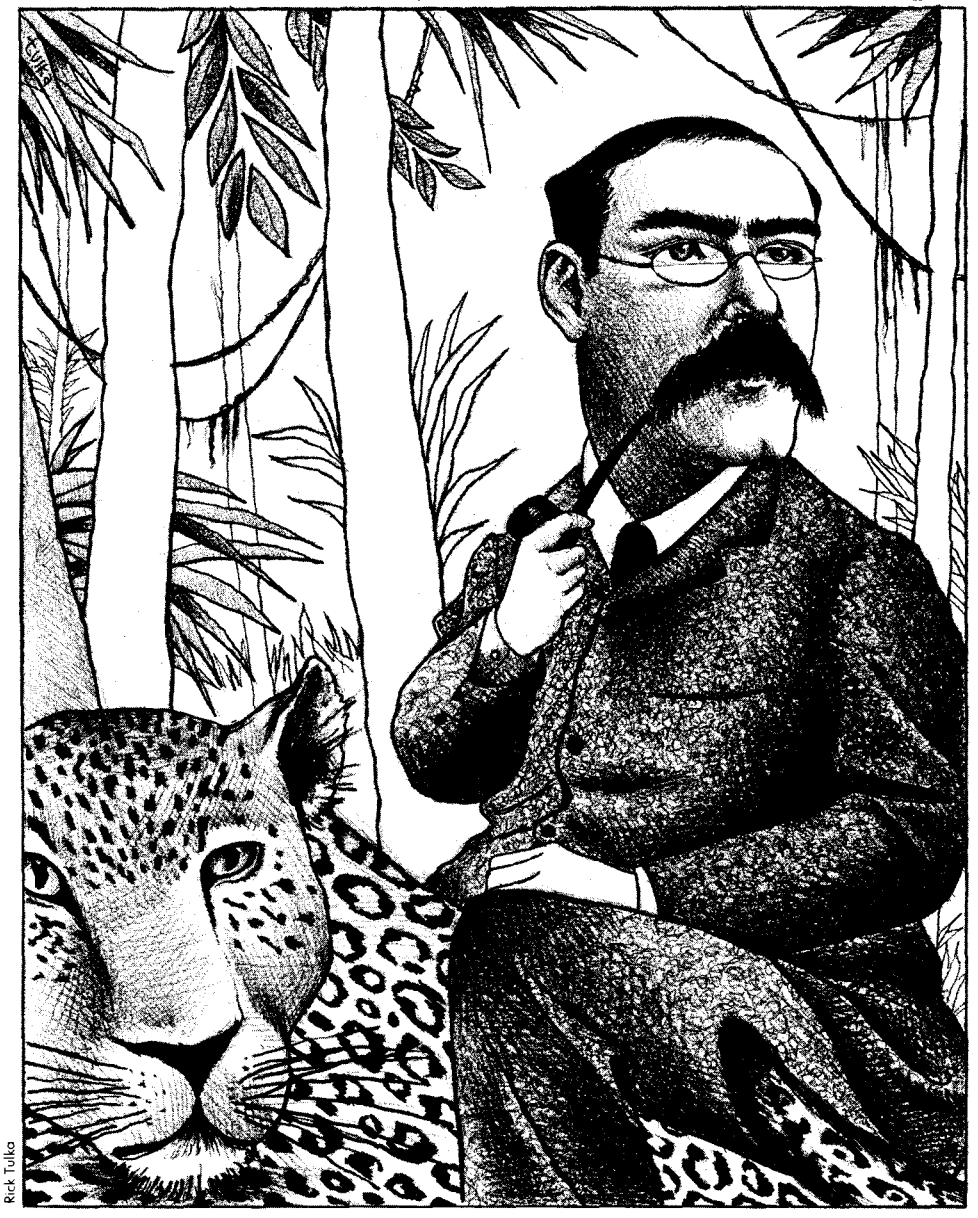
Would that serve the cause of responsibility? Once again, the answer depends upon who defines responsibility in any given case; but those who place a high value upon a "robust and uninhibited press" and who have learned to be skeptical of the government's assertions of "national security" are not likely to think so.

BUT EVEN IF no such drastic step as instituting an Official Secrets Act was taken, why not more restrictive libel and privacy laws? Would they limit press freedom so severely as to threaten the public's right and need to know? And what about a non-governmental press council, at least to criticize—constructively, as well as punitively—press performance, even if the council had no real power to punish or penalize?

The question of more severe libel and privacy laws requires, essentially, a value judgment. There isn't much doubt that greater protection from press charges than is now provided for public officials would limit the ability of the press to act as a check on the power of government; but some reasonable persons believe the press has too much latitude to criticize government, expose its workings, penetrate needed confidentiality, and hinder its effectiveness. Similarly, no one should be in doubt that stricter protection of individual privacy from searching press inquiry would frequently prevent needed public exposure and discussion of personalities, institutions, and processes; but few in the press would deny that the power of the press has too often been the instrument by which have come unwarranted personal humilia-

Continued on page 50

Just So



Rick Tulka

The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Works
by Angus Wilson
Viking, 416 pp., $15

Reviewed by Peter Andrews

I MUST ADMIT at the outset to a certain critical failing when it comes to writing about Rudyard Kipling. I first became interested in "serious" reading through this great English storyteller. *Captains Courageous* was the first novel I read simply for the pure joy of reading an interesting story, not because it was assigned in school. "Rikki Tikki Tavi" was the first short story I ever read that had the power to scare me witless—indeed, I live in Westchester County right now largely because there is so little likelihood of a cobra joining me for breakfast. "Gunga Din" is the first poem I ever memorized. In fact, I won a public speaking award for its recitation at Seaman Avenue Grammar School, in Freeport, Long Island, although Miss Draffin later chastised me for delivering the line "I'll get a swig in Hell from Gunga Din" with rather too much relish for her taste. I find now, in what passes for my maturity, that I can no more be severely critical of Kipling's work than I could criticize my Uncle Larry. Born in Calcutta, Uncle Larry was something of a Kiplingesque character himself. Family legend has it that Uncle Larry was something less than a solid citizen, but he filled my early years with tales of joyous excitement. In all probability, his stories of life in India were no more accurate than Kipling's, and now that I think of it, some of them were probably Kipling's in the first place. But I don't know that the few pleasure bringers of this world have to be scrutinized too carefully.

In any event, Kipling needs no aesthetic going-over by me. As George Orwell once pointed out, no major author has ever been so sorely criticized by people who manifestly have not read the stories they were writing about. The youngest author ever to be awarded the Nobel Prize, Kipling was nonetheless a perpetual outsider in English literary circles, and he was to pay dearly for that estrangement. Kipling was criticized for being mawkish. Certainly in stories such as "Wee Willie Winkie" he stepped over the threshold between sentiment and sentimentality. But how anyone could condemn Kipling for sentimentality when James M. Barrie still believed in fairies is beyond me. Curiously, Kipling has also been accused of being an author without a heart. In his later writing, when illness and personal distress clouded his life, Kipling's stories do take on a certain coldness. But "Without Benefit of Clergy" is one of the most touching stories in all of literature. His politics, of course, are still a great embarrassment. The distinguished, if often wrong-headed, *Penguin Companion to English Literature* identifies Kipling as a "poet, short-story writer, journalist, and imperialist." He did cling to the dream of an Anglo-American hegemony long after it was politically unacceptable. Whether he made a greater public fool of himself than Norman Mailer is doing right now, however, is a matter of conjecture. Certainly, Mailer is closing fast.

The list of Kipling's failures goes on and

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on. He was not a good novelist. His only attempt at an adult novel, *The Light That Failed*, is a doleful affair. Kipling was a particularly inept handler of dialogue. His speeches do clang upon the ear, but I doubt that his dialogue is appreciably worse than that of Henry James. While there are few of us who have not at one time been moved by their crude power, we can relegate most of his poetry to the dustbin of cheap doggerel. We can cut away his children's books, although *Kim* and the *Jungle* books, like youth, are much too good to be wasted on the young.

But when we have done all of that, we are still left with the stories of Rudyard Kipling. Hundreds of them: funny stories, ghost stories, love stories, horror stories; stories of gallantry, greed, stupidity, frailty, and magnanimity; stories that touch the heart and stories that chill the blood. Within those hundreds are some—"The Gardener," "Mary Postgate," "The Tomb of His Ancestors," "A Sahib's War," "Mrs. Bathurst," and "The Man Who Would Be King"—that must surely be reckoned among the masterworks of the English language.

The very breadth of Kipling's work has worked against a cogent critical analysis of it. An Oxford don or a prospective Ph.D. can take the 14 novels of Thomas Hardy and turn out a whacking-good thesis on Hardy's brand of naturalism, showing man pitted against basic and malevolent forces. But Kipling resists such extended and logical analysis. I recently read criticisms of Kipling's stories by two distinguished literary historians. One examined a group of the tales and took the author to task for failing to insert into them the necessary artist's perception, which would have lifted mere stories to high art. The other examined a different selection and found them marred by Kipling's insistence on imposing his own persona onto tales that would have been better told straight.

Kipling did not deal in broad themes. He was the quintessential storyteller. He pulled up a chair, tamped down the tobacco in his pipe, stood the reader to a glass of good shooting sherry, and spun out a story. Then another one. And then another one. They were all Kipling, and even the weakest of them are still immensely readable, but sorting them out semantically can be successful only so far. Eventually it becomes like cataloging snowflakes—an intriguing but illusive prospect.

In writing *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling*, Angus Wilson makes a vigorous try at this difficult task. His research has been extensive. Wilson seems to have read everything Kipling has ever written, including his numerous newspaper dispatches. His literary assessments of Kipling's works are compelling and spiritedly put forth. Wilson is scrupulously fair in dealing with Kipling's politics, which he clearly finds repellent. There is only one major flaw in *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling*: It is not very interesting. Or, to be as fair to Wilson as Wilson is to Kipling, it is not as interesting as it could have been.

He starts out with an engaging thesis. Kipling, according to Wilson, "was a man who, throughout his life, worshipped and respected children and their imaginings. He took part in children's games ... not, as so many adults do, in order to impose his own shapes, but to follow and to learn." But after offering this intriguing clue to Kipling, Wilson loses track of it and fails to develop it. In considering the early part of Kipling's literary output—when the master was pouring out stories faster than most people could read, let alone write—Wilson is pushed along so quickly that he has no time for analysis beyond a brief mention of the title along with a snippet of biographical information. After he gets to the turn of the century, when Kipling's output lessened somewhat, Wilson is able to take more time to develop his themes. His analyses of the stories from the Boer War onward are consistently intriguing, although I disagree furiously with some of his conclusions. He finds "Mary Postgate," for instance, so dreadful as to be evil, while I think it is one of Kipling's best.

In his generally sympathetic account, Wilson falls into a literary trap. He extracts from "Teem" a line that he calls a "central clue" to what he considers Kipling's major flaw as a writer: "Outside of his art, an artist must never dream." Wilson is entitled to his opinion, but I wonder how appropriate it is to distill the essence of a creative artist as complex as Kipling from a single line, especially when that line is spoken by a dog who is hunting truffles.

There are some splendid insights in *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling*. Wilson does an excellent job of illustrating Kipling's gradual alienation from the major sources of his inspiration. The India he thought he understood eventually became a bewildering complexity to him. He lost touch with the common enlisted men he loved so much. When he wrote *Departmental Ditties*, in India, he was just a bespectacled newspaper reporter named Kipling. But in 1898, when he sailed with the Royal Navy to gather material for a series of sea stories, he was the famous author, Mr. Rudyard Kipling, and spent much of his time closeted with the officers. His lack of perception in portraying sailors in his navy stories shows it.

Although Wilson's book is intended as a literary assessment rather than as a biography, he ignores some scenes in Kipling's life that I would have thought essential to our understanding of Kipling as a writer. His refusal of the poet laureateship after Tennyson's death in 1892 and his being awarded the Nobel Prize at such an early age would seem to be moments that cry out for examination.

Though *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling* may be something short of perfection, once under way it gathers considerable steam and, particularly in the second half, becomes a much valued addition to the reevaluation of Kipling's work. Despite my carpings, this book accomplishes the primary objective of any literary biography: It sends the reader back to the author and his works with fresh thoughts and new insights. After finishing Wilson's book, I pulled out my family's volumes of Kipling, some of them so old they had the Indian Ganesha sign on them (which as a child I had confused with the German swastika), and started reading him again.

What a splendid writer Kipling was. Like Mark Twain, he is one of the few masters of the English language whom a child can read with delight and then as an adult can keep on reading without taking his teddy bear along. ◉

Peter Andrews is a free-lance writer.

The Psychiatric Zapping of America

Mind Control
by Peter Schrag
Pantheon, 327 pp., $10

Reviewed by Robert Claiborne

MEDICINE, as any honest doctor will tell you, is not an exact science. Its psychiatric branch, as many psychiatrists will *not* tell you, is barely a science at all. The disorders with which it deals are mostly diagnosed by criteria that are blurred at best, ambiguous at worst; often its practitioners can't agree on whether a given diagnostic category covers one disease or several.

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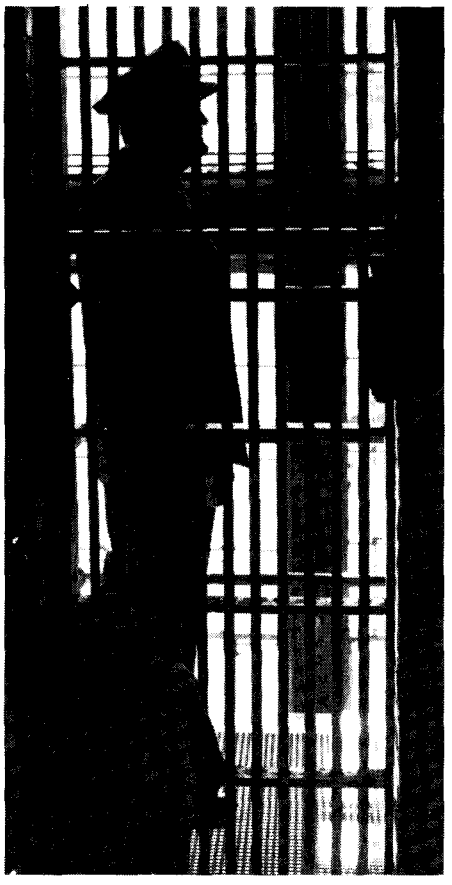

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THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR®

The causes of mental illness are understood only in the most general way, if at all; treatments for it are usually rather crude and not infrequently ineffectual, if not actually harmful. Nor does anyone really know why a given treatment works or fails.

The main reason for this lamentable state of affairs is, of course, the complexity of the phenomena that psychiatry deals with: the human mind or, in physiological terms, the central nervous system (CNS). In structure and function, the human CNS is by far the most intricate of the body's organ systems; indeed, it is at least as complex as all the other systems put together. Moreover, its functioning is constantly changing—not only as a result of disease (as can occur with any organ) but also as a result of normal experience. A healthy stomach processes food at age fifty pretty much as it did at age five, but if a mind remains unmodified by 45 years of experience it can hardly be called human.

Unfortunately, the very difficulty of the scientific problems psychiatrists confront has led some of them, along with some of their colleagues in clinical and experimental psychology, into intellectual shortcuts that distort or bypass the scientific method. Humanly—and admirably—they want to help their patients, or clients. Equally humanly, they would like to feel *sure* they are helping (in other words, that they really know what they're doing). No less humanly, though less admirably, some psychiatrists enjoy playing God or playing Monopoly with government money, and for both of these recreations a degree of seeming omniscience is invaluable, if not essential. As a result, such psychotherapists, consciously or otherwise, have fostered grandiose expectations of what their healing art can accomplish—expectations that, paradoxically, can engender both fear that the psychiatrists are as powerful as some of them claim to be and resentment when it turns out that they are not.

Peter Schrag's *Mind Control* embodies both attitudes. On the one hand, he criticizes psychiatry for not being effective enough; on the other, he views with alarm the "mind control" that psychiatrists and their paraprofessional satellites are allegedly fastening upon us. He sees "a fundamental shift in the way government and other organizations control the lives and behavior of individuals ... the replacement of overt and sometimes crude techniques—threat, punishment or incarceration—with relatively 'smooth' methods: psychotropic drugs; Skinnerian behavior modification; aversive conditioning; electronic surveillance...."

Schrag's ostensible target is what he calls the "mental health network," which includes not just psychiatrists but mental health clinics; prison and parole officials; social and welfare workers; the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW); and all who collectively are extending psychological "intervention" to millions never before subjected to it. The network has expanded greatly in recent years, thanks to public funds dispensed mainly through Medicaid, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), and various law enforcement projects,under the illusion that existing psychiatric methods can identify "potential criminals" and then, hopefully, "cure" them.

In pursuit of the tax dollar, some mental health agencies have employed much the same tactics—including inflated body counts—that the Pentagon has used in *its* pursuit of the public buck. For example, an HEW official claimed in 1975 that more than a million American children suffer physical abuse or neglect each year, and of them a fifth (about 200,000) die; soberer estimates put the numbers at something like 125,000 and 1,000, respectively. In addition, the agencies that dispense public funds, having money to spend, squander some of it on projects of the most dubious merit. For example, the NIMH has granted a total of $280,000 to the superstar psychologist, B. F. Skinner—at least part of it for writing two books that are absolute travesties of science.

Up to this point, Schrag's attack on the network is on firm ground. His overall denunciation of mind control, however, fails to convince because he never manages to state the problem clearly, either quantitatively or qualitatively.

Quantitatively, he is not above playing the body count game himself. Thus he declares in his introduction that the network treats "some 5 million people a year, most of them with drugs"; some 40 pages later the figure has escalated to "anywhere from 7 to 40 million," depending on "the definition of treatment"; still later, we have between 30 and 40 million being treated with psychotropic drugs alone. Among the clients—or victims—of the network, Schrag even includes "a growing number of people [who] have become willing recruits for be-

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Robert Claiborne has been writing about science and medicine for both scientists and the general public for over 20 years. He is now at work on a book, The High Cost of Health—and What to Do About It.

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havior modification—volunteers for 'behavior therapy' in alcohol, drug, smoking, sex and diet clinics." Yet these are people who have chosen to try to modify *their own* behavior; the methods they have selected may or may not be effective but are certainly not being imposed on them. Or is there something sinister about Alcoholics Anonymous and Weight Watchers?

Qualitatively, Schrag obfuscates his own argument because of an ill-concealed animus against psychiatry. To make a convincing case against the abuse of psychiatry, one must distinguish use from abuse, which Schrag seems quite unable to do. His discussion of this branch of medicine is marked by unreasonable demands, half-truths, and an occasional low blow.

For instance, Schrag demands that the diagnosis of mental disease be grounded on "an organic or chemical base—some demonstrable and specific malfunction." Most psychiatrists would be happy to do this; unfortunately, such "hard" criteria do not yet exist. Psychiatry is in much the same position that somatic medicine was in before the microscope, X ray, electrocardiograph, and sophisticated chemical analysis existed, when disease had to be diagnosed on the basis of a few ambiguous physical signs and symptoms and was variously ascribed to witchcraft, "excess of humors," and "bad air" (in Italian, *mal'aria*).

Psychiatry does not yet possess tools subtle enough to probe the operations of the brain, as the electrocardiograph probes those of the heart, and must therefore judge its functioning or malfunctioning by outward manifestations in the patient's behavior and mood. Presumably this is what Schrag is getting at when he declares that most diagnoses of mental illnesses are merely "labels for acts which someone or some agency finds offensive, disturbing or disruptive, or for behavior which fails to satisfy social convention or cultural expectation." By this bit of 1960s rhetoric, Schrag obscures the fact that much—though obviously not all—behavior of this sort is *destructive to the individual engaging in it or to other individuals*. The rapist, the "flasher," the paranoid schizophrenic, the suicidal depressive, all engage in "offensive, disturbing or disruptive" behavior. Should psychiatry therefore throw up its hands and consign them to the prison or the straitjacket?

Schrag apparently thinks so. He says, for example, that "the man who threatens his wife with a knife... is more likely to end up on [a tranquilizer] than in jail." If this statement means anything, it is that Schrag would prefer to see the man in jail—to which the man might object—or free and untranquilized—to which his wife might object.

To Schrag, tranquilizers and almost any other kind of psychiatric treatment represent "control"—which is a no-no. Yet in the quoted words of a mental health official, "If you have a guy that's going to go home and beat up his kids, you give him a drug to try to keep him from doing it. Obviously it's control... but what else are you going to do?" Not surprisingly, Schrag doesn't answer this question. If forced to respond, he would probably say: Abolish the poverty (or racial discrimination or whatever) that makes the man want to beat up his children. I'd say amen to that—while reserving judgment on whether abolishing poverty or other disadvantages will automatically abolish mental disease. While we are working toward social justice, however, we surely have some responsibility to protect a child from his father's brutality—whatever its cause. To simply denounce control as Schrag does is to miss the real questions: Who needs control, and what kind, and to what ends—and who says so?

Schrag considers psychotropic drugs bad because they exert control and also because they don't cure mental illness, which again misses the point. Anticancer drugs often fail to cure cancer, and cardiac drugs almost never cure heart disease. Yet properly used, they—like the psychotropic drugs—can extend life and improve its quality. The real problem is not that tranquilizers are being used, but that they are undoubtedly overused by some psychiatrists and by many other physicians.

An even worse form of control in Schrag's view is electroshock therapy (ECT), which he suggests is not really therapy but "punishment"—another no-no. In fact, the important questions about ECT are not whether it is unpleasant—surgery is unpleasant—but whether it is effective and whether there are less unpleasant alternatives, such as (you should excuse the expression) drugs. For the suicidal depressive who does not respond to antidepressant medication, the alternatives are ECT or institutionalization for an indefinite period. Or, of course, suicide. ECT may well be used too often and too intensively, as Schrag says, but this has nothing to do with its being "punishment."

Occasionally Schrag descends from obfuscation to abuse. Thus, having quoted two psychiatrists as saying that "in schizophrenia the person *is* the disease," he declares that this "can only lead to the conclusion that the best way to eliminate the disorder is to eliminate the person." Since there is no evidence that these psychiatrists, or any others outside Hitler's Germany, favor the elimination of schizophrenics, this is plain dirty fighting.

The overuse, and sometimes misuse, of psychiatric and quasi-psychiatric concepts and techniques is, I think, a real and important problem. Unfortunately, Schrag's analysis of the problem is badly weakened by his own biases. As for his contention that the network is some sort of national menace, he makes no factual case at all.

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BLACK NIGHT, WHITE SNOW: Russia's Revolutions 1905-1917

DOUBLEDAY

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Indeed, his unfavorable comparison of "smooth" techniques, such as the use of psychotropic drugs, with "overt and sometimes crude" ones, such as punishment or incarceration, can only lead to the conclusion that we should return to even cruder ones, such as the rack and branding iron!

Schrag claims that the network is abolishing "impositions which [the individual] can regard as unjust or capricious, and against which he can dream of rebelling.... Gradually even the ability to imagine alternatives begins to fade. This is, after all, not only the best of all possible worlds, it is the only one." And this statement, after all, is merely a blend of Aldous Huxley with warmed-over Marcuse—and like many of that eminent philosopher's dicta, it lacks any factual foundation: Schrag cites not even one individual thus brainwashed. His vision of the mental health network quelling the dream of revolt is merely a nightmare born of his own intellectual indigestion.

There are undoubtedly some psychiatrists who—out of megalomania, greed, or grantmanship—will claim that they can do six impossible things before breakfast—things that Schrag and I might often agree are undesirable. Most psychiatrists, I think, take a much soberer view of their profession and its limitations. A few years ago one of them, commenting on "widely publicized fears about the kind of undesirable government control...that George Orwell envisioned," noted wryly that "the efficacy and power of psychiatric treatment ...[are] exaggerated by its critics." Even if we assume with Schrag that the mental health network seeks to impose mind control on America—which I, for one, don't believe—we have no reason to think that it has the means to do so. ◉

Parody of Forms

Shrovetide in Old New Orleans: Essays and Articles
by Ishmael Reed
Doubleday, 312 pp., $8.95

Reviewed by
Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

THE REPRESENTATION of reality in black fiction has come to be as controversial a subject among blacks as the depiction of black characters in white fiction once was. The political uses to which various reform movements—such as the abolitionist and the civil rights movements on one hand and those of the Marxists and the "cultural nationalists" on the other—put black creative writing almost demanded an unblinking fidelity to realism. Concern with verisimilitude—with even the most minute, concrete descriptions of the manner by which racism dehumanizes black people, as illustrated by the sanguinary depictions of the sadism peculiar to ghetto existence—is common to black fiction.

Afro-American fiction has grown stunted within these dubious ideological demands and has until recently remained a fledgling art. Black novelists and critics seem to treat their literature almost exclusively as a vehicle for ideas about "liberation" and the evils of the white man. It is an art in which content triumphs gallantly, but at the debilitating expense of form. What's more, many black writers seem to conceive their task to be the artful dodging of any portrayal of the so-called black experience other than the monolithic formula created by sociologists. To parody Henry James, the House of Black Fiction has many windows, but they stand cracked and jagged. Haunted by alienated Running Men, our house is strewn with dead rats and with cockroaches that feed off the ashen-pale bodies of demonic white people. The smell of collard greens steaming on the gas burner is all that mitigates the stench of death. And nowhere can we unravel James's "figure in the carpet," if only because the kitchen's linoleum is worn so thin. It is a house in tatters, created by novelists who failed to see that in the act of writing they had committed themselves to the construction of a coherent, symbolic world, one related to—but never meant to be a mere plausible reproduction of—the real world, even the nightmare world of the inner city. This failure produced the sort of writing in which "types" reigned tyrannically over a one-dimensional kingdom of hate.

With the notable exceptions of Zora Neale Hurston and Sterling Brown, concern with black realism, epitomized in Richard Wright's *Native Son*, stood virtually unchallenged until Ralph Ellison published *Invisible Man*. In the past 10 years, Ellison's literary heirs—such as Leon Forrest, Ernest Gaines, Gayl Jones, Toni Morrison, James Alan McPherson, Ishmael Reed, and Alice Walker—have disregarded the myopic assumptions about the function of their art. Theirs seems to be an art of extended metaphor, in which the real world is potentially identifiable with the richly complex worlds they create in their novels—worlds free of the simple-minded dichotomies between pale villainy and dark right. Of this group, perhaps no one has altered our notions of what is possible in black fiction more than Reed.

Reed's reputation more often than not is subsumed under the vague and often derogatory category of "satirist," as if that label could relegate him to some safe corner of the absurd. Yet Reed's five novels consistently manage to consolidate disparate artistic influences (black and white; Eastern and Western; written, oral, and visual) while commenting ironically on the shape of the American novel. His use of satire is no whimsical choice.

Thematically, as in *Mumbo Jumbo*, he forces us to discover the still largely untold role of blacks as creators of American culture and as word sorcerers who nurture a secret culture; formally, as in *Flight to Canada*, he takes imaginative liberties not

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., teaches in the English and Afro-American Studies departments at Yale.

Yes or No

Can a Christian believe in reincarnation and still remain loyal to Bible and church?

Reincarnation in Christianity

by Dr. Geddes MacGregor

Can you be a good Christian and still believe that you have lived many lives before this one, and will live many more after this one? This is the question Dr. Mac Gregor asked himself. Former Canon Theologian of St. Paul's Cathedral, Los Angeles; Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Philosophy, Univ. of Southern California, he carefully studied important comments by many leading Christian figures. He cut through centuries of religious emotionalism, and presents a thorough, calm, and objective examination of this thoroughly intriguing concept.

"Rather than his position detracting from the personal nature of the Christian life, he enhances and enriches it." **— Ernest Gordon, D.D., Dean of Chapel, Princeton Univ.**

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only with plot and point of view but also with Newtonian notions of time and space. He is as effective in drawing attention to the conventions of the realistic novel as Richard Pryor's "Book of Wonder" parody is in outlining the formal patterns of the black sermon and as Stevie Wonder himself is in satirizing the vapidity of some classical music when he sets the words of "Village Ghetto Land" to the music of a concerto. This satire is of the subtlest sort: the parody of forms. As with science fiction, it uncannily reveals perhaps even more about the myths by which we order our lives than does the most painstakingly exact photographic reproduction.

Reed's is an art based on the tension of dissonance—on the power of art to say far more than it states precisely because it fails to reflect everyday life and fails as well to allow value to be derived from a political message. *Shrovetide in Old New Orleans* is a motley collection of articles and essays, written between 1972 and 1977, in which Reed discusses what he calls "the multi-cultural" influences on his own fiction, pays homage to the black artists to whom he feels indebted, and shares in detail the often bitter controversies that he seems so adept at generating. Even more important, he reveals at length the nature of Vodoun (voodoo or hoodoo, as it's known popularly) and traces the patterns it assumes in his own work. It is this attention to Vodoun, the key metaphorical system that threads its way through all of his work, that gives this collection its unity.

Throughout, in disarmingly revealing asides, he seems concerned to put to rest his image of the artist as an embattled man. "Writing has made me a better man. It has put me in contact with those fleeting moments which prove the existence of the soul." Even more, he seems intent on using various methods of exposition in the essays to "show that I know the difference between an essay and a work of fiction." If the matter was an open question, it remains so no longer, for in these pieces Reed uses Mencken's techniques of wry irony and a biting wit to draw a self-portrait that is alternately humorous and polemical, but at all times perceptive, honest, and human.

Reed's concerns are those of an artist. In a long interview with the satirist and essayist George S. Schuyler, as well as in two insightful critical essays on the novels of Chester Himes and on Wright's *Native Son*, Reed takes his stand against what he calls "social realism" as defined by those who "feel that life has to be a heavy Russian Dostoevskian din of intense pain, as some critics ... require black writers to believe." His art and his critical judgments are committed, he repeats throughout, "toward overcoming the consciousness barrier erected by an alliance of Eastern-based black pseudo-nationalists and white mundanists who in the 1960s sought to dominate Afro-American intellectual thought with their social realist position papers." What he values most in all forms of human cultural expression is an art that manages to contain the triumph of even the absurdly human over the demonic forces of despair. "At least," he concludes his essay on Himes, "he doesn't sabotage his product by packaging it in poison." Even more adamantly, Reed opposes those who would reduce the complexity of the human experience to mere cant or to gross generalization, as he states rather eloquently in a moving tribute to Walter Lowenfels.

Within his three long essays on Vodoun, finally, Ishmael Reed not only describes in vivid detail the form and function of this metaphysical system that syncretized various African and European religions but he also demonstrates just how this system of thought has become his metaphor for the black man and the essential philosophical framework for his fiction. By deriving his symbols, physical laws, and ethical values from this still largely misunderstood system of signs, Reed reveals implicitly the arbitrary biases that undergird our traditional notions of order, ethics, and aesthetics. He contends that his is "an art form with its own laws," one that demands "the necessary scholarship" for its decoding, which more than any other reason explains the often bitter and generally confused critical reviews he receives. But Reed has taught us more about the penetration of appearances and about the remarkably persistent strength of black culture than has anyone since Ellison. Reed's essays, like his fiction, are "songs turning back onto themselves," at all points urging a more encompassing concept of reality than a merely Western one. Toward what goal? Reed answers, "The goal of racial understanding" that will come "through cultural revolution, the way most profound revolutions occur: A man enters the city on the back of an ass; his autobiography becomes the empire's best seller." With these essays, Reed reinforces his importance to modern writing. ◉

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Books in Brief

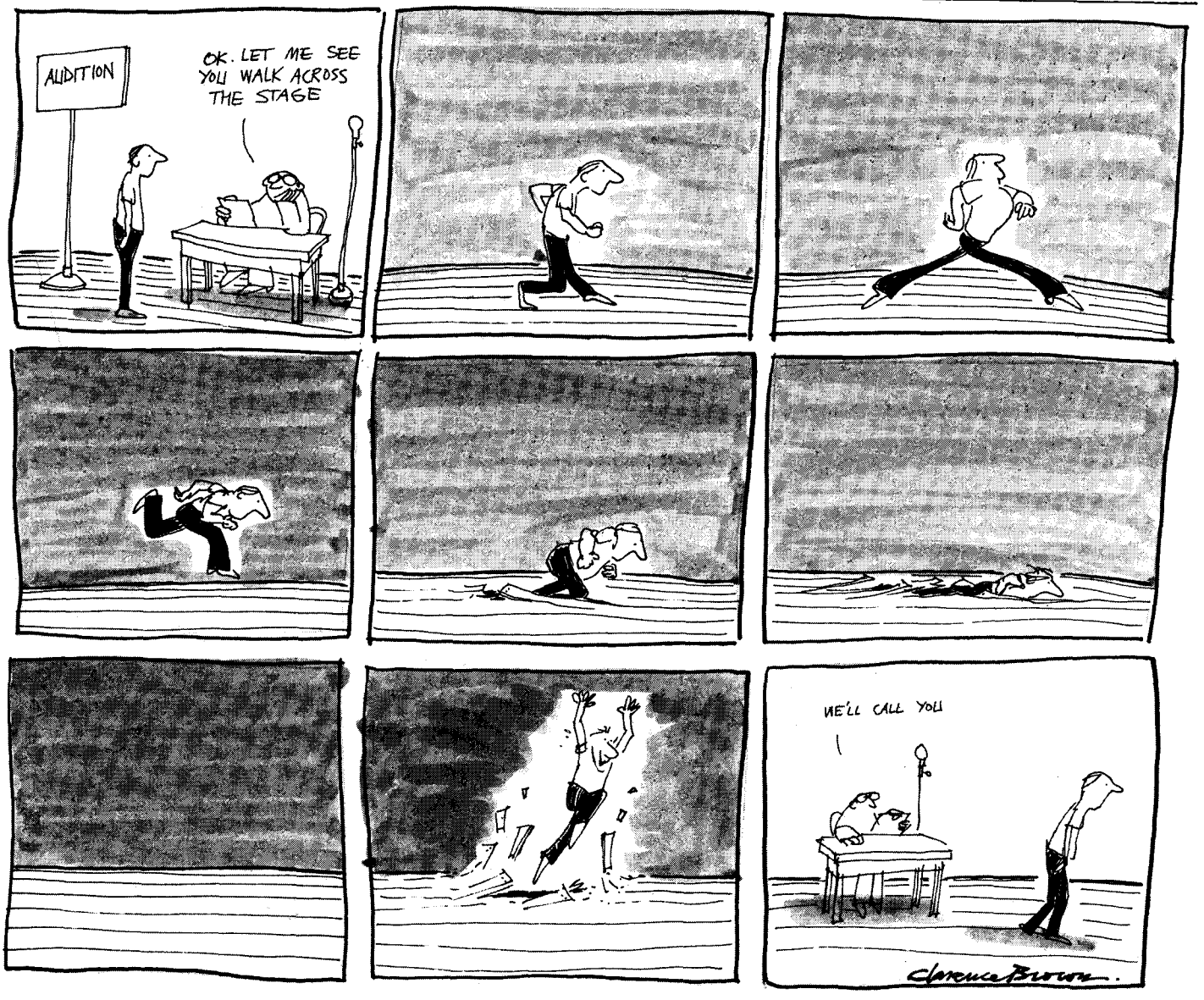
Reflections Without Mirrors: An Autobiography of the Mind
by Louis Nizer
Doubleday, 448 pp., $10.95

Imagine yourself sitting down to coffee and brandy in the company of Louis Nizer to hear the inside story of the libel suit Jacqueline Susann almost filed against Truman Capote, or of Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy's mean-spirited prosecution of his old friend Igor Cassini, or of what might have been the greatest case of Nizer's career—pleading Richard Nixon's cause before the United States Senate. It's a commonplace that trial lawyers see human nature at its worst. Yet the particular appeal of Nizer's anecdotal postmortems is that they satisfy our taste for gossip about his famous clients without descending from the plane of principle.

This innate civility, which has served him so well in his double career as advocate and author, cripples Nizer as an autobiographer. Even so, however, no one can feel cheated, since Nizer has chosen a title that advertises the book's limitations: We are shown a series of surface reflections, carefully arranged to avoid mirroring the inner man. Of course, many of the occasional reminiscences are both entertaining and painlessly uplifting. Besides the courtroom and law office vignettes, there are Nizer's memories of the brilliant but unworldly cantor Josef Rosenblatt; a gracious tribute to Nizer's political hero, Adlai Stevenson; and twin profiles of former New York mayors Jimmy Walker and Fiorello La Guardia that transcend the clichéd images of both men. The charm of this extended afterdinner monologue wears thin, however, when Nizer turns to garrulous and anticlimactic commentaries on brain research, psychic phenomena, and women's liberation. One can only mourn the book that might have been if the author had interrupted his ongoing summation for the defense and put himself on the witness stand. —JOYCE MILTON

Listening to Billie
by Alice Adams
Knopf, 215 pp., $7.95

The memory of hearing Billie Holiday sing at a club one night in the Fifties haunts the heroine of Alice Adams's third novel. Enthralled by the beautiful and tragic singer, Eliza Hamilton, "a somewhat literary girl, who occasionally wrote poems," is also terribly worried: Is she pregnant? Should she marry her lover, stuffy Evan Quarles? She is, and she does. When Evan kills himself after falling in love with "the most beautiful boy in the world," Eliza takes her small daughter to San Francisco



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and begins the slow process of becoming a poet. Over the next 20 years, other lives are closely woven with Eliza's: her foolish, hippie-earth mother daughter; her ethereal, fanciful sister, Daria, who is driven to the brink of madness by her marriage to a pompous young millionaire; many men, including a young narcissist both sisters love; her mother, the formidable Josephine, herself a writer, who frankly finds her wayward daughters disappointing.

Alice Adams's clean, spare prose and subtle choice of details make *Listening to Billie* a pleasure to read. She has, moreover, a rare sympathy for almost all her characters: Even Daria's sexist, Nixonite husband is generously portrayed. At the center of the novel, though, Eliza herself is curiously unfocused. Although we are told that she "pursued intensity with lemminglike directness," she seems on the contrary a woman of considerable emotional guardedness. Although she sleeps with many men, she falls in love with only two, and then only briefly; and when one of these men is unfaithful, she throws him out with admirable presence of mind (no lemminglike self-destructive urges there!) and lets what seem to me rather fancy hesitations keep her from marrying the other. Eliza is likable and mature but as self-contained as a cat—the antithesis of the passionate, reckless singer she so deeply admires. —KATHA POLLITT

The Plague Dogs
by Richard Adams
Knopf, 416 pp., $10.95

After the rabbits of *Watership Down* and the ancient bear of *Shardik*, Richard Adams has turned to a tale of two dogs, Rowf and Snitter, who escape from an animal research station, ally with a fox, kill sheep and raid garbage cans, frighten a gullible populace, and finally evade a battalion of British paratroopers.

With its difficult excursions into the Geordie dialect, its occasionally scatological language, and its frightening reminders of man's indifferent cruelty to animals, this is no idyll. But Adams wrote a happy ending, obviously with children in mind, and the book is equivalent to *Huckleberry Finn* in difficulty and maturity; indeed, older children would seem a better audience than adults for *The Plague Dogs*.

Adams writes brilliantly about animals but with heavy-handed satire about people. Attempting to simultaneously evoke nature and indict society, his long novel occasionally mires in antivivisectionist lectures. Fortunately, the dogs' adventures in the Lake District are splendid, and even the humans are convincing when seen through the eyes of Adams's animals; only when forced to look at a person straight on does Adams blink, stumble, and record another cardboard character.

As Adams has become more ambitious, his language has grown clumsy and affected; surely even a dog who has been cruelly subjected to brain surgery is not entitled to speak like a pastiche of King Lear's monologues. Still, when these dogs are on the move, they compel us to follow, trotting along the narrative path on all the legs we have. —CHARLES NICOL

Momo
by Emile Ajar
Translated by Ralph Manheim
Doubleday, 192 pp., $6.95

Despite the alarming statistics regarding the rapid development of the child psyche, Emile Ajar's sense of precocity is utterly staggering. The title character of this mercifully short screed is the abandoned son of a Moroccan prostitute, a ten-year-old manchild whose brief street education has imbued him with a maculate conception of humanity. Anti-Semitism, thievery, vulgarity, procuring, and a garden variety of defilement are the staples of little Momo's seamy treadmill. These addictions, along with a philosophy of survival to rival that of Pretty Boy Floyd, are ill-conceived as endearing by Ajar. Fagan might find Momo endearing; those of us with any moral fiber would prefer to find him under the scrutiny of the gendarmes.

Momo's plight is to establish his identity from a battery of striated clues. Meanwhile, he is content to care for his ailing guardian, Madame Rosa—a senile retired streetwalker who ruminates rapturously about her imprisonment in Auschwitz as though giving a slide presentation—and a group of urchins dumped in her brothel by working mothers. Momo and the children's combined efforts seem to revolve around keeping Madame Rosa alive, and this medley of chaos is orchestrated by a Senegalese transvestite named Madame Lola, who, according to Momo, "was so unlike anyone else, you felt you could trust her."

The problem is in putting one's faith in Ajar's circumlocutious rhetoric and the veneer of promising vignettes that surround a nucleus of hollow emotions and empty triumphs. —ROBERT STEPHEN SPITZ

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Fine Print

Two Catholic Firsts

by Doris Grumbach

BOOKS IN THE TRADITION of what we sometimes call "the Catholic novel" are relatively few. The designation refers to fiction that either is written by authors who happen to be born Roman Catholic but whose scope is outside the tradition (Flannery O'Connor, Mary McCarthy) or is Catholic in subject matter (works by such authors as J. F. Powers and Edwin O'Connor). Recently, I was introduced to two very good first novels by writers whose subject matter seems suffused with religion.

Joseph Caldwell's *In Such Dark Places* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $8.95) and Mary Gordon's *Final Payments* (Random House, $8.95) are impressive debuts. The work of both suggests Catholic tradition. Their exploration of experience has those intellectual and psychic colorations that seem to belong to the cradle Catholic—a shade, a tint, from which it appears there is no escape.

Caldwell's novel is, as his title suggests, the darker of the two. On the surface, it is a violent story of the need for love, set in the present East Village of New York City and arranged in a series of extraordinarily successful and graphic scenes. Like *The Sound and the Fury* (which it resembles in no other way), it is an Easter novel, beginning with a curious re-creation of the last journey of Christ. During the pageant, Johnny, one of the Roman soldiers who is delightedly flogging the Christ, is murdered. A riot starts, people are wounded. The events are photographed by the novel's protagonist, Eugene, a homosexual and lapsed Catholic. Then his camera is stolen—he thinks by a boy named David, who has been dogging his footsteps.

With Eugene's search for his camera, the novel turns picaresque. But this description does not begin to exhaust the book's depth and scope. *In Such Dark Places* is about love and faith, isolation and commitment, guilt and expiation. It combines vivid portraits (the parish priest; young homosexuals; Helen, who lives briefly with Eugene; David's mother; Raimundo, another Roman soldier) with some unforgettable scenes.

Caldwell writes a deceptively simple prose, without decoration, metaphor, or simile. Leonard Michaels is correct in comparing it to Sherwood Anderson's work (especially, I think, his *Winesburg, Ohio*). And the epiphanic final chapter will remind other readers of the customary end game in Flannery O'Connor's novels and stories. However, *In Such Dark Places* is so satisfying and so completely realized that I don't want to brand Caldwell by comparing him to established novelists or to call him, as we often do first novelists, "promising." He is here, well worth reading now and watching for in the future.

Final Payments lacks some of the mystery and the sense of transcendence of Caldwell's book, but it has its own virtues. It is an engrossing story of thirty-one-year-old Isabel Moore, who lives in Queens, New York, and has thus far spent her life caring for her father—a not unusual situation for a "good Catholic girl." The novel begins with the death of Isabel's dynamic, domineering, intelligent, and bigoted father and then follows her entry into the world at large—the world of her two friends, Liz and Eleanor.

Limited to a single, traumatic sexual experience in her early years, Isabel is seduced by Liz's husband and later falls in love with married Hugh. In both relationships, she discovers the needs of her own inhibited sexuality. She buys clothes, she beautifies herself, she takes a job. During this burst of self-discovery, Isabel (who is narrator as well as heroine) tries to escape her love/hate feelings for her father; her guilt at deserting her faith; and her belief that she wronged her father's obnoxious housekeeper, Margaret, whom she hates.

Though enjoying her new freedom, Isabel is caught in a web of Christian virtues: the need for sacrifice, the desirability of celibacy. Then, in an astonishing and unexpected turnabout, Isabel deserts her apartment, the world of sex and love, and her friends and goes to care for Margaret, as dreadful and abhorrent an old lady as has ever been created. Oh, the heavy and constant hand of the church, we say to ourselves. But Isabel tells herself: "If we can love the people we think are most unlovable, if we can get out of this ring of accident, of attraction, then it's pure love; then we mean something, we stand for something."

There are echoes of Saint Theresa of Lisieux in Isabel's odd turn, but they do not endure. Before the end of the book and the final note of return, reconciliation, and rescue, we are taken through some wonderful Irish-Catholic scenes: a farewell party for a boy going to Vietnam, a wake, a scene in a gynecologist's office, one in the rectory of a whiskey priest. And most especially (one of the treasures of Gordon's narrative), there are some beautifully written passages of visits to the aged living in foster homes—visits that are part of the job that Liz's boorish husband, John, gives Isabel. The counterpoint between the vignettes of the lives of the old people and Isabel's exploratory adventures is effective and convincing.

In my memory, what Gordon calls "the charmed circle of fortune and benefice" in which Irish-Americans live has rarely been re-created so well. When all Isabel's payments to her past are finally made—to church and priest, to housekeeper and father, to Queens and parental house—she is able to bravely reenter the secular world of Liz and Eleanor. But so persuasive is Gordon's portrait of Isabel's early Catholic years that one wonders if the new life will not be as temporary as the first. Is it possible for her to escape her mold, or has her life, like Eugene's, been irrevocably formed long before?

Both books, out of the same tradition, are good first novels. Both surprise and delight. Is there any more one can ask of them? ◉

Fraser Young
Literary Crypt No. 102

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. *Answer on page 52.*

KXY FIWOY EZ HKI-
KOIPN UH EMULJ KE
UKH TUZZUAOWKN.
NEO MEOWT LEK
FIWOY KXY ZULYHK
XYIT AOK OREL I
AIPPEK.

—TP. VEXLHEL

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Trade Winds

by William Cole

Aging, Dying, and Otherwise

Linda Pastan's third book of poetry, *The Five Stages of Grief* (Norton, $8.95 cloth, $2.95 paper), is divided into five sections, each dealing with a stage we all pass through: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance. Many of the poems are about aging and dying, some concern housewifing and mothering, and others deal with matters Jewish. Pastan's a fine, solid poet, perceptive and accessible, and she is one of the recipients of the Poetry Society of America's 1977 Di Castagnola Award, which is given for a work in progress. Here's "25th High School Reunion":

> We come to hear the endings
> of all the stories
> in our anthology
> of false starts:
> how the girl who seemed
> as hard as nails
> was hammered
> into shape;
> how the athletes ran
> out of races;
> how under the skin
> our skulls rise
> to the surface
> like rocks in the bed
> of a drying stream.
> Look! We have all
> turned into
> ourselves.

Hero—More or Less

Bleak is the word for contemporary Londonderry as shown in Jennifer Johnston's novel *Shadows on Our Skin* (Doubleday, $7.95). If you want to know what's happening in Irish novels today, Miss Johnston is your man (as the Irish would say). She writes a spare prose—three quarters of the book is dialogue. We have a seedy Catholic family in bomb-torn Derry: The father is a sick man who boasts of his patriotic past; the mother, hardworking, quick-tempered, and religious; twelve-year-old Joe (our hero—more or less); and big brother Brendan, back from an English sojourn. Both brothers are smitten with a local schoolteacher named Kathleen. Here's a typical morning-after-the-night-before scene in Derry:

> A building at the bottom of the hill was still smoldering, and some workmen were clearing away the rubble. There was a queue at the army checkpoint, and they stood there among the women with shopping baskets and prams, shuffling along a few feet at a time. Bags open. Shuffle. Kathleen lit her cigarette as they waited. Hands patting up and down you. "Ta love." The faces remote as the hands slide over their bodies. "Next." Bags open. No love lost. "Any bombs in the pram love?" No time for jokes. Guns always at the ready. Bags open. Never turn your back on a Mick. Feet shuffled, and the shopping bags were moved from arm to arm, to ease the weight.

A Playful Scholar

Not being a scholar, the title *A Handbook for Scholars* didn't make me grab for the galleys. But I skimmed a bit of the book and became engrossed. It's a proper-usage guide published by Knopf ($12.95 cloth and—scholars being notoriously penniless—$5.95 paper). The author, Mary-Claire van Leunen, is far from dryasdust and has a good sense of humor—she's even playful now and again. In the introduction she says that scholarly prose, "by its very nature, lacks the rhetorical virtues of reckless passion." The book is about such arcana as proper footnoting, citing, acknowledging, alphabetizing, along with material on formats, choosing a typist, and correcting galleys—in a word, all that goes with publishing or perishing. I learned a new, and logical, word: "alphanumeric." That's how you identify monarchs and popes. Here's the author's note on the use of "his" and "her":

> My expository style relies heavily on the exemplary singular and the construction "everybody... his" therefore comes up frequently. This "his" is generic, not gendered. "His or her" becomes clumsy with repetition and suggests that "his" alone elsewhere is masculine which it isn't. "Her" alone draws attention to itself and distracts from the topic at hand. "Their" solves the problem neatly but substitutes another. "Ter" is bolder than I am ready for. "One's" defeats the purpose of the construction which is meant to be vivid and particular. "Its" is too harsh a joke. Rather than play hob with the language, we feminists might adopt the position of pitying men for being forced to share their pronouns around.

Butts, Buggs, and Boozers

Instead of the usual dribble of mail my maunderings elicit, the piece on John Train's *Remarkable Names of Real People* [*SR*, December 10, 1977] has brought in some 400 postcards and letters. I've hit an artery, not a vein. Some readers went through their phone books and sent 50 ridiculous names; others had been collecting funny monikers for years and shared them with me. There are rafts of people in this country with names like Butts, Buggs, and Boozer. Everybody snickers at the name Ophelia. Ten people sent in Pearl Button; a like number, Vermont Royster (who's in the book with his middle name, Connecticut). Many pointed out that Ima Hogg has a sister, Ura. The president of Ohio State, Novice Fawcett, got a number of citations. Thank you, everybody. This is merely an interim report; John Train is sifting through mountains of mail and will eventually decide who gets a free book. ◉

the FABULOUS DIANE
see • HER RAISE 3 KIDS SINGLEHANDED
see • HER ORGANIZE & MAINTAIN A HOME
see • HER PREPARE MEALS AT
see FINAL PERFORMANCE TODAY
DOUGHERTY

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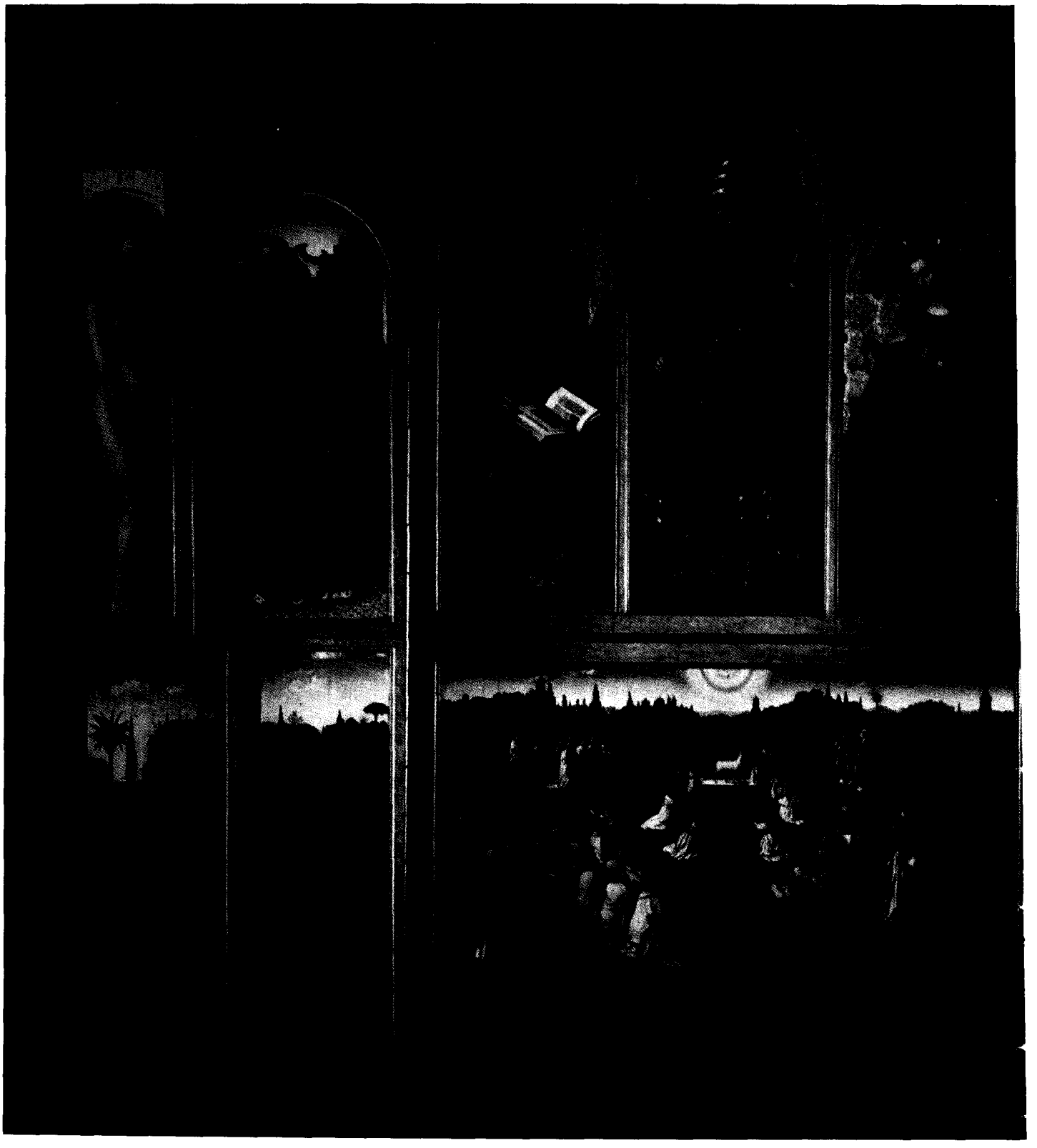
The Mystery of the Ghent Altarpiece



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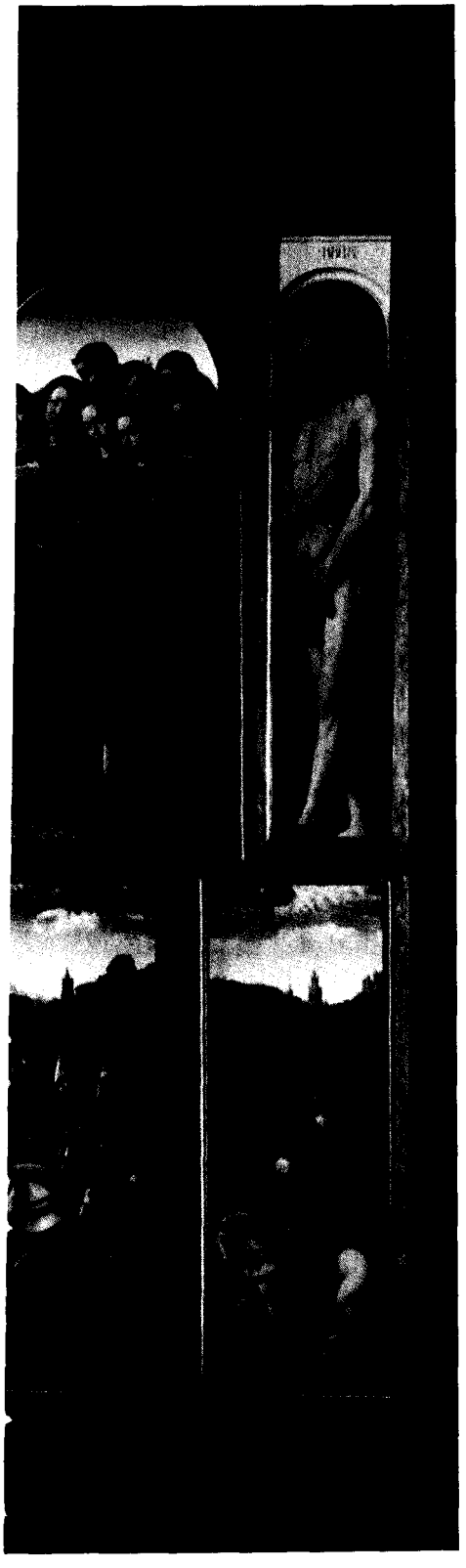
by Jon Swan



Scala/EPA

MOST PEOPLE enjoy art. Few understand it. Still fewer are capable of totally altering the way we look at an accepted masterpiece, of clearing away its mysteries and thereby helping us to appreciate fully a once puzzling work of art.

One of these gifted few is Lotte Brand Philip, an energetic, attractive senior member of the art history department at the Queens College of the City University of New York. Philip's ability to solve art history mysteries has gained her a reputation as a kind of contemplative Lieutenant Columbo or an imaginative Miss Marple in the field of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century religious art. Like Columbo, Philip has a knack of asking seemingly innocent yet disconcerting questions, such as: What did this medieval masterpiece look like in its own day? And like Agatha Christie's Miss Marple, Philip brings to the field of detection the special knowledge of one who has submerged herself in the life and times of those whose masterful works she seeks to understand.

In Philip's case, the culprit is not the artist but time and time's ravages. Given the violent religious uprisings of the late Middle Ages, which resulted in the vandalization of countless works of art, and the fact that kings "collected" choice bits and pieces of many-paneled paintings, the odds that a medieval masterpiece has come down to us intact are extremely slim. When looking at a painting from the Middle Ages, most of us don't bother to ask ourselves if something might be missing. Philip does ask—and she is not satisfied until she has found an answer.

To retrace the steps Philip took that led to the solution of a long-unsolved art mystery is an enlightening and a humbling enterprise. Once she has amassed her evidence and solved a case, one's reaction is likely to be, "Why, of course! Why didn't I—or *somebody*, at least—think of that before?"

One of her most dramatic "cases" involved the Ghent Altarpiece, which was completed in 1432 and is one of the largest surviving religious paintings of the fifteenth century. It is also perhaps the most celebrated work of the early Flemish school of art. Long attributed to "the brothers Van Eyck"—Jan, the great master of early Flemish painting, and Hubert, a shadowy figure—it can be seen today in exactly the same place for which it was commissioned: a chapel in St. Bavo's Cathedral, in the once grand city of Ghent. (Ghent, which lies about midway between sprawling Brussels and lovely, dead, medieval Bruges, was the largest and richest city of western Europe in the fifteenth century.) The fact that it has remained there is in itself unusual. Most religious masterpieces have been moved into museums, where they are seen out of context; viewers forget that these works served a specific purpose in their churches. Precisely what purpose the Ghent Altarpiece served was one of the questions Philip asked herself as she set about trying to solve its mysteries.

What was mysterious about it? I must confess that when I first viewed the many-paneled altarpiece a few years ago, I was not struck by its mystery but by the sheer brilliance, the luminosity, of the work. The altarpiece, whose wings are movable but whose center is stationary, was opened to show its main, feast day view. And when the altarpiece is opened, it glows. Fifteenth-century worshipers had, I knew, been struck by another aspect of the work. They had never seen such lifelike figures or such a realistic landscape. Realism then was just beginning to emerge in the art of northern Europe; its best-known practitioners were miniaturists like the Limbourg brothers, who in the early fifteenth century were illuminating the precious book of hours for the Duc de Berry in Paris. In the Ghent Altarpiece, the common people could, perhaps for the first time north of the Alps, behold the story of man's salvation in a vast representation in which many figures were nearly lifesize and all, whether caught in mid-song or about to speak, seemed alive.

It was only with a second look at the altarpiece that it dawned on me that something strange was going on. It had to do with scale. All the saints and martyrs in the lower level of the interior view, I noticed, were tiny when compared with the figures in the upper half. Moreover, the scale of the figures in the upper level kept changing. Adam and Eve were larger than the music-making angels but smaller than the three divine figures in the fixed central panel: the Lord, the Virgin Mary, and Saint John the Baptist. Once perceived, this constant shifting of scale was unsettling.

Back in America, I couldn't get the altarpiece out of my mind, largely because it spoke, with such confidence and eloquence, that great dead language in which our forefathers used to converse with God and partly because the altarpiece puzzled

Jon Swan is a poet and free-lance writer who lives with his Dutch wife and three daughters in the Berkshires.

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me. How did all its variables fit together? Reading about the work, I soon found myself caught up in the mystery surrounding the Ghent Altarpiece.

A crucial date in this tale of detection, I learned, was 1832. It was then, four centuries after the completion of the altarpiece, that a four-line Latin poem was discovered under a coat of greenish paint on the frame beneath the panels that show the donors and the two Saint Johns—the Evangelist and the Baptist. The lettering was Gothic, and it was in bad shape. Still, after supplying the letters and whole words that time or accident had rendered illegible, the text could be made out to say: "The painter Hubert van Eyck, greater than whom no one was found, began [this work], and Jan, his brother, second in art," completed it "at the expense of Jodocus Vijd" in 1432. The Latin poem was full of news. It seemed to say that Hubert had been a painter of even greater renown than the famous Jan; two masters, not one, had worked on the altarpiece. Art historians concluded that Hubert must have been the elder brother, that he had conceived the whole, that he had died before its completion, and that Jan had taken over the commission. Excited at having found a work bearing Hubert's name—for until then, none had ever been found—scholars promptly began to try to determine which parts of the altarpiece the great Hubert had painted. This they did by sorting out those parts that seemed to have the style Jan used in his signed works, then ascribing to Hubert those parts that looked less "real," less "advanced," less three dimensional. Unanimity proved hard to come by, however. Over the course of more than a century, every portion of the altarpiece attributed to Hubert by one scholar was attributed to Jan by another.

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

"The Lord enthroned in a miniature by a contemporary of Van Eyck."

IN THE MID-1940s Erwin Panofsky, a founding father of art history in America, set out to explain once and for all just what each brother Van Eyck had done and what it all meant. He did this in one densely argued chapter of his two-volume *Early Netherlandish Painting*, originally given as the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard in 1947 and 1948. (Published in 1953, Panofsky's book is still acknowledged to be a classic work on the general subject of early Netherlandish painting and its use of symbolism.) As Panofsky saw it, the troublesome interior view of the Ghent Altarpiece was an "ingenious combination" of

Of Heaven and Earth

WITHOUT the sculptural framework around the Ghent Altarpiece, "the meaning of the painted panels simply cannot be understood," said Lotte Philip. Among the theological riddles of the panels that Philip solved are: Why are there two heavens—one stacked on top of the other—in the interior view of the altarpiece? And what are Adam and Eve, those famous sinners, doing on the same level as the Lord, the Virgin Mary, and Saint John the Baptist?

Philip pointed out that the altarpiece depicts the heavenly vision of Revelation: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth.... And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven.... And [the angel] showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb...." The upper portion of the altarpiece, then, shows the new heaven as a Gothic cathedral; the lower portion shows the new earth as a paradisiacal landscape.

There is good reason, too, for the presence of Adam and Eve in the new heaven. As Philip was the first to observe, the overriding theme of the Ghent Altarpiece is the union of God and man as expressed in Saint John's apocalyptic vision: "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men ... and God himself will be with them." In the Ghent Altarpiece, the new heaven is the setting for the final reunion of the Lord and his redeemed mankind. Adam and Eve stand there as the representatives of all humanity.

A third question had to do with exactly what is taking place in the new heaven and on the new earth. Philip explained that the panels illustrate the celebration of the heavenly mass, in which, according to Saint Paul's letter to the Hebrews, Christ is both the celebrant and the sacrifice. In the new heaven, Christ is the priest who celebrates the mass, while the Virgin and Saint John recite the sacred texts and angels sing and play their instruments. On the new earth, He is the sacrificial Lamb.

Out of these insights Philip conceived another that, like her reconstruction of the framework, enables the modern viewer to grasp the prodigious impact that the altarpiece must have had on the fifteenth-century worshiper. Philip surmises that from the soaring top of the sculpture work to the bottom and on down to the altar tables below, a vertical progression of religious symbols once moved from heaven to earth, as it were, and then led the devout viewer back up to heaven again.

High up in the stone canopy, God the Father was shown; below him, the Lord enthroned; below him, the Dove; below the Dove, the Lamb; below the Lamb, the Fountain of Living Waters; and below the fountain, the little stream that flows through the green grass of the new earth. Did the stream originally stop where it does now, cut off by the modern frame? Philip is convinced that it did not, that it gave the illusion of flowing directly into a vessel standing on the altar—a vessel that held the Eucharist, the body of Christ taken at Communion. As Philip wrote, the worshiper "saw the sacred water, the result of the celestial sacrifice, flowing... into the vessel from which the priest would hand him the Host. The believer thus virtually became a participant in the celestial rite." —J. S.

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three works begun by Hubert and finished by Jan. The panels showing crowds of the blessed adoring the Lamb of God, Panofsky believed, had originally been intended as an All Saints' altarpiece, "probably destined for display in the city hall rather than the church." Those showing the Lord, the Virgin Mary, and Saint John the Baptist, he believed, had been designed for yet another altarpiece, while the two groups of musical angels had been designed to decorate a pair of organ shutters. Jan, busy with his own work but compelled by his brother's untimely death to finish the huge altarpiece, had artfully combined three works that were not meant to be seen together, Panofsky wrote. In addition, Jan had painted all the exterior panels—those showing the Annunciation, the donors and saints, and the prophets and sibyls who had foretold the birth of Jesus—as well as those two exceedingly realistic panels showing Adam and Eve. In short, the Ghent Altarpiece was a makeshift masterpiece with no unified meaning.

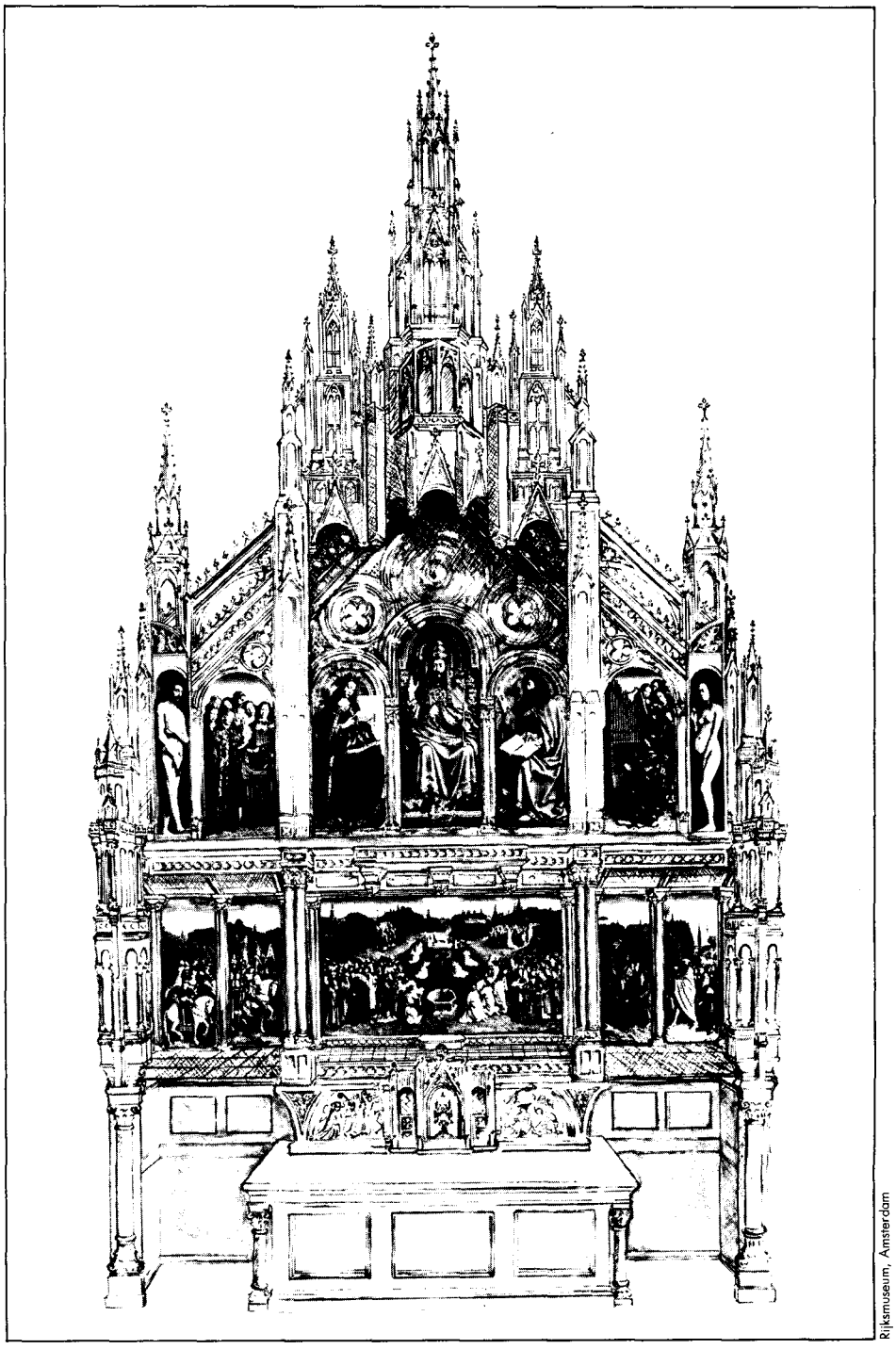
Given Panofsky's vast learning and authority, the case appeared to be closed. The culprit had been time in the sense that Jan, hurrying to finish the piece, had resorted to this "ingenious combination" of three thematically unrelated works of art.

But while Panofsky's solution answered some questions, it raised others. For example, would Jan van Eyck—who became a master painter in 1422 and court painter to Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, in 1425, seven years before the completion of the altarpiece—have collaborated in the production of a makeshift work of art? And would an immensely wealthy donor like Jodocus Vijd, who was soon to become burgomaster of Ghent, have accepted it? Finally, would the ecclesiastical authorities have allowed a set of paintings that had no single religious message to be set up as an object of contemplation for the devout? They were sticklers on such matters.

Enter Lotte Brand Philip. Philip, who like Panofsky was born in Germany, had heard Panofsky lecture on the Ghent Altarpiece in Hamburg, in 1932, shortly before he emigrated to America. She recalls that her admiration for Panofsky's brilliant discourse was, even then, "mixed with a feeling of violent contradiction." Nearly 40 years would pass before Philip would pay homage to her mentor by respectfully contradicting him and to the Ghent Altarpiece by revealing it anew as the unified masterpiece it had once been.

It was in 1964 that she came upon the first clue concerning the mystery of the altarpiece. Philip had by then settled in New York City and was lecturing on art history at Queens College. One afternoon, she recalls, she stopped at the Wittenborn Art Books store on Madison Avenue "simply to browse." A book jacket caught her eye. Its color jacket illustration was of a portion of the golden house-shaped reliquary of the Virgin housed in Aachen, the site of Charlemagne's main palace residence in northwestern Germany. "This is it!" Philip recalls saying to herself. "This is the Lord enthroned from the Ghent Altarpiece!"

In that moment one insight after another came to her. "In my mind's eye," Philip recalls, "there appeared the tall, two-level reliquary structures built to display these golden shrines, which I had seen years before in the abbey church of Saint-Denis, outside Paris. I immediately recalled how much fifteenth-century painters enjoyed imitating all kinds of ancient church furnishings. Van Eyck, I concluded, had wanted to pass off his Ghent Altarpiece as an ancient reliquary structure, with the Lord and his two sacred companions enthroned in front of a golden shrine."



Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Philip's reconstruction—"Triumph of imagination, scholarship, and sheer good luck."

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Had a soaring stone framework resolved the differences in scale among the painted figures? Had it unified the work in a way that was presently unimaginable? Philip began to entertain this idea as a working hypothesis. There was, however, one hitch: The chapel of St. Bavo's Cathedral in Ghent has no such structure.

What might have happened to it? Philip was aware that religious riots had broken out in Flanders in the 1560s, at which time many ecclesiastical works of art had been destroyed. Contemporary accounts of those riots written in Ghent revealed that two days before the iconoclasts stormed the churches of Ghent in 1566, city officials had ordered the painted panels of the Ghent Altarpiece removed from the chapel and taken to the church tower for safekeeping. As a result, according to one chronicler, only "the idols"—the statues—had been destroyed. Philip interpreted this as a reference to the statuettes and reliefs that must have adorned the two-story-high sculptural framework. And she thought it likely that the badly damaged framework had subsequently been dismantled.

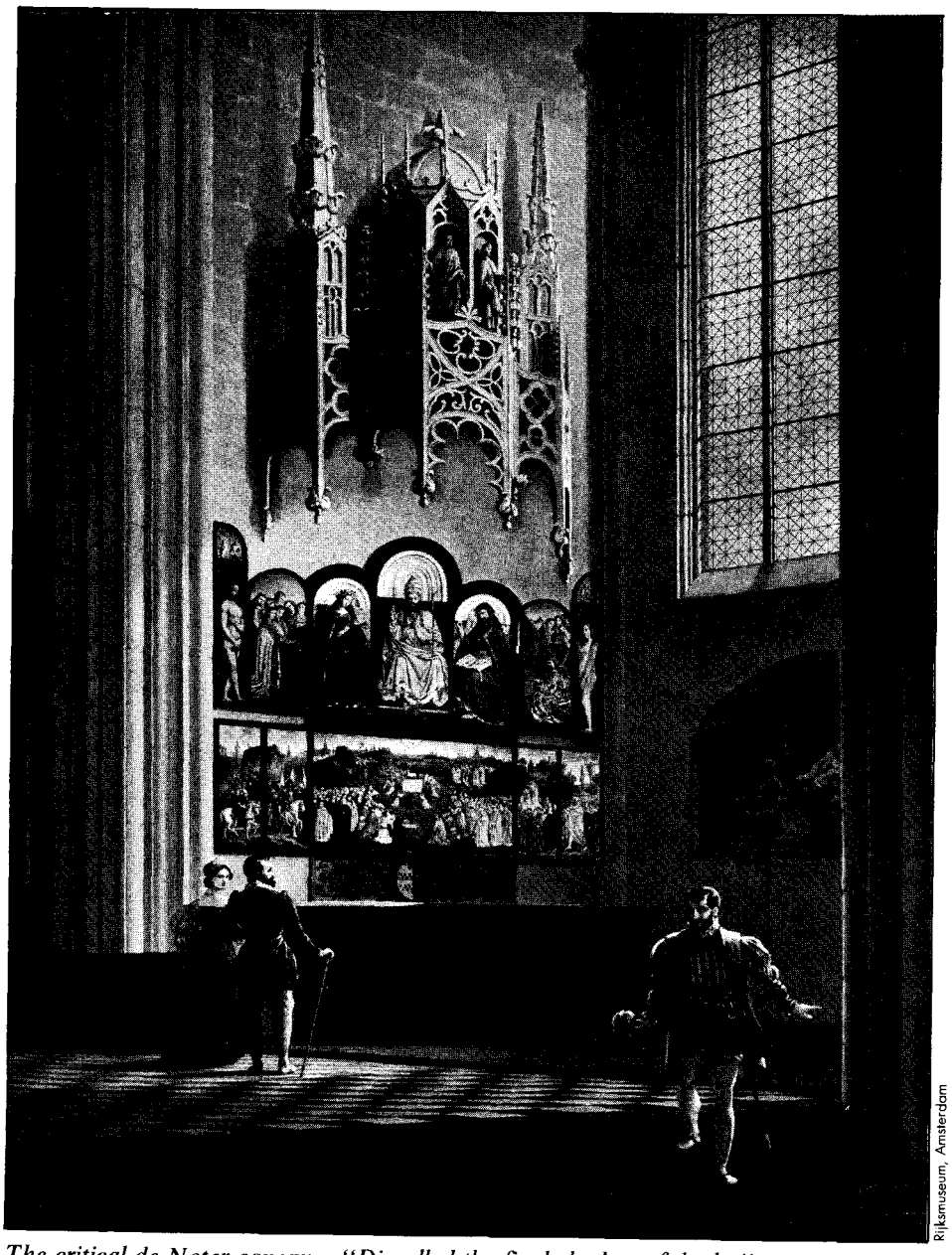
Still, it is one thing to explain why something is not in place now and quite another to come up with convincing evidence that it had once been there. Could she prove her theory?

Philip scouted around for evidence, and thanks to the powerful effect the art of Jan van Eyck had had on his contemporaries and followers, she was able to find three particularly impressive pieces influenced by his work. We shall call them exhibits A, B, and C.

Exhibit A: The sixteenth-century Netherlandish artist Jan Gossart depicted a painted architectural framework in his free copy of the three central figures of the "golden shrine" portion of the Ghent Altarpiece.

Exhibit B: Two columns on either side of the interior view of the Adoration of the Lamb are shown in a late-sixteenth-century copy of the Ghent Altarpiece.

Exhibit C: A small Gothic cathedral encloses the Lord enthroned in a miniature by a contemporary of Jan van Eyck. As Philip pointed out: "The core of the building which contains the throne ... is connected by flying buttresses with two buttressing piers....If the framing stone architecture of the Ghent Altarpiece was constructed on the same principle, the strange appearance of the seven upper panels can be explained. The core of the building ... enclosed the golden reliquary with the [three divine figures]. The angels were placed directly under a system of flying buttresses in an open space. The panels of Adam and Eve were the buttressing piers."



Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

The critical de Noter canopy—"Dispelled the final shadow of doubt."

Such a structure would explain why the three divine figures are seen against a golden background while the musical angels are silhouetted against a blue sky and Adam and Eve are seen within stone niches. The lost framework clearly defined three different environments and three realms of reality, from the Holy of Holies to the earthiness of Adam and Eve, who are represented as colored statues miraculously come to life. It would also explain why the crowds of the elect adoring the Lamb are much smaller than the figures above them: The saints and martyrs were seen as set back in space—behind the large porch or portico whose columns supported the room above.

What had the original framework looked like? Philip's reconstruction is given as exhibits D—the altarpiece with the wings closed—and E—with the wings opened to show the feast day view.

Philip first presented her case in January 1965 at the College Art Association's annual meeting, held in Los Angeles that year. Her reconstruction, which solved so many riddles and allowed the full beauty of the work to be grasped for the first time in many centuries, was enthusiastically received, and she went on to deliver her lecture at 37 colleges and museums. Her reconstruction, moreover, allowed her to look at the original red herring clue—the Latin poem found in 1832—in quite a different light than other art historians had. Not suspecting the existence of a vast

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sculptural framework and faced with a text saying that two artists had worked on the altarpiece, they had divided up the painted panels between Hubert and Jan. Philip, who had revealed the work's original unity, assigned all the painting to Jan and the framework to Hubert. Other scholars had readily supplied the letter *p* to fill out the damaged word *ictor* and had come up with *pictor*, or "painter." Philip supplied the letter *f* and came up with *fictor*, which is very good Latin for "sculptor." And while others had read "*arte secundus*" to mean that Jan van Eyck had been a less accomplished painter than Hubert, at least in 1432, Philip knew from her study of commissions for other altarpieces of the time that Jan would not have begun to paint until the frame had been completed. Jan, then, was second in art in a purely chronological sense—he was the second to work on the great altarpiece.

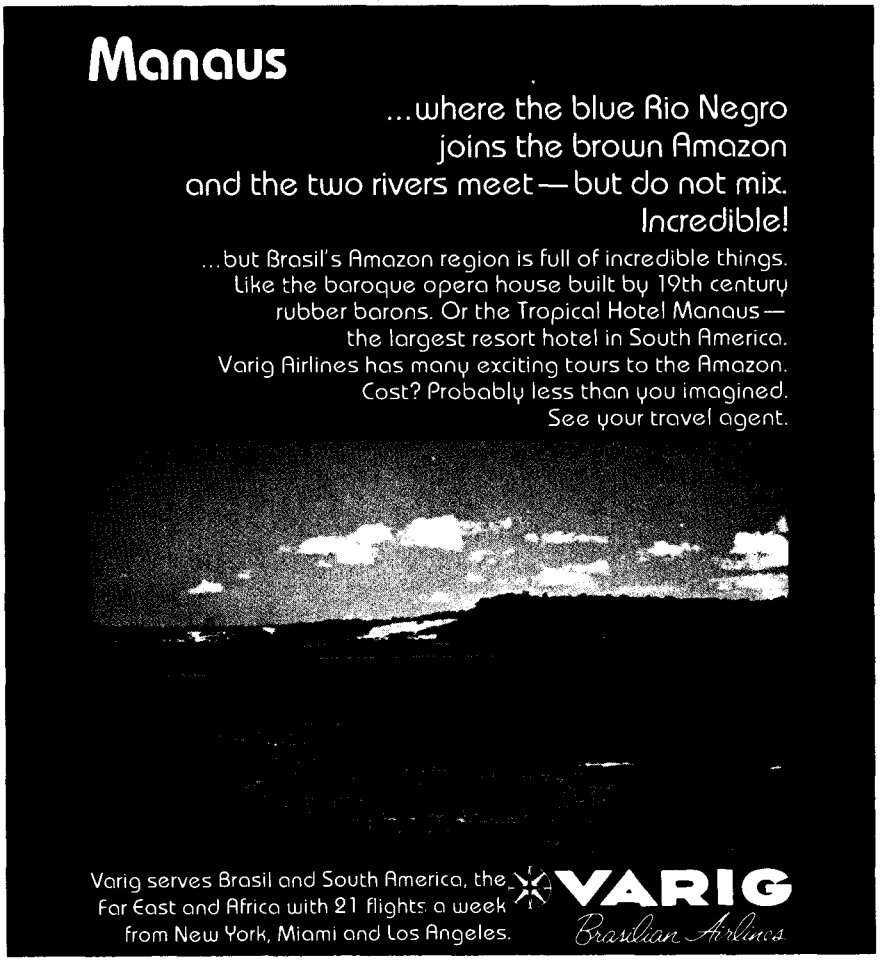
SO FAR, PHILIP'S CASE, while strong, had been built on what was, strictly speaking, circumstantial evidence. Everything *pointed* to the existence of a sculptural framework, but Philip still had not proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that a framework had, in fact, once been on the chapel wall.

That final shadow of a doubt was dispelled in the summer of 1966. Philip flew off to spend a summer in Belgium. After visiting Ghent she went to Brussels, where the Centre National de Recherche Primitif Flamand maintains an enormous collection of photographs, X-ray pictures, and infrared pictures touching on all aspects of early Flemish painting. There Philip and Mme. Jacqueline Folie, a scholar on the institute's staff, spent an afternoon going through 50 or 60 boxes of pictures relating to the Ghent Altarpiece. The two women worked their way down to the last box. For a moment, Philip recalls, "I wasn't sure there was much point in going on. But I picked up the box and glanced through the pictures and then—there it was!" The photograph was of a picture, now in the Rijksmuseum, in Amsterdam, painted by Pierre François de Noter in 1829, when the Gothic revival was just beginning on the Continent. It showed the Vijd Chapel in St. Bavo's Cathedral as De Noter believed it had looked in the early sixteenth century. In the process of trying to visualize the chapel as it had looked then, De Noter had not added anything except for three figures dressed in period costume; he had merely omitted all the objects in the chapel that struck him as not being "Gothic." Thus, he faithfully showed above the painted panels of the Ghent Altarpiece a large stone canopy—the sole portion of Hubert's sculptural framework to survive the onslaught of the iconoclasts and the subsequent ravages of time. As Philip later wrote: "The canopy ... is, apart from its restorations, virtually identical to the one I sketched in my reconstruction drawing long before I knew of the nineteenth-century picture. No wonder, then, that I am inclined to regard the De Noter painting as a document which proves the basic accuracy of my reconstruction."

One could call this finding serendipitous, but Philip was the only person in the world to whom it could have happened; she alone could grasp the significance of this fragment of a framework as she alone had believed it had existed.

Philip's solution to the mystery of the Ghent Altarpiece represents a rare triumph of the mind in which imagination, scholarship, and sheer good luck combined to recreate a masterpiece. It was a labor of love that spanned a full 20 years, culminating in a scholarly and yet exhilarating book, *The Ghent Altarpiece and the Art of Jan van Eyck*, published by Princeton University Press, in 1972. (Panofsky, previously the most authoritative commentator on the art of Van Eyck, died in 1968; thus there is no way of knowing how he would have received a theory that differed from his own.) In a review that appeared in *The Art Bulletin*, Karl W. Birkmeyer, a professor of art history at the University of California, Los Angeles, wrote that Philip's account of her search for evidence of the missing framework "reads like an extremely well-constructed mystery story." (He also praised the book as "a unique contribution not only to scholarship—that is taken for granted in the case of its author—but as a contribution to scholarly writing on scholarship.") In a similar vein, an anonymous reviewer writing in *Choice*, the American Library Association's review of scholarly books, called Philip's book "another exciting 'Whodunit' by art history's most gifted writer" of detective tales.

If the culprit in this case was time, Philip arrested it—and allowed art lovers of the twentieth century to enjoy and understand a masterpiece as the common folk of Ghent did the day it was consecrated in 1432. ◉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Music: Rock

The New Neil Young

by Stephen Demorest

NO CURRENT ART FORM honors the ethic of the dare as much as rock music. Its stars feel compelled to live as precariously close to the edge of excess as possible, lest they forfeit their cool.

Some pull back safely, like the now patrician Mick Jagger, and some, such as the late Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin, lose their balance forever. Precious few are able to carve out such a history of skillful brinkmanship as has Neil Young, the thirty-one-year-old loner who for more than 10 years has danced unflinchingly along the edge of that greatest of all precipices, Romance. Young is a romantic whose narcissistic mortification cuts so deep that his music—as evidenced by his latest release, the triple-disc retrospective, *Decade*—is among the most passionate in rock.

A rock star fashions his legend in several ways—with his music, of course, but also with his clothes and his habits and his women. Young's image is that of a frontiersman. Sporting unkempt flannels and jeans and scraggly hair, the Manitoba native is not a particularly striking figure, though a woman I know makes much of the veins that stand out on his hands when he plays guitar. He does, however, go in for smart, sensitive women, periods of seclusion on his adopted West Coast turf, and a virtual ban on interviews—behavior so consistent with his music that it suggests the sure integrity of a self-absorbed mountain man. This makes Young a relatively rare figure in contemporary rock and roll at a time when most of his peers have been reduced to recycling their greatest hits.

Young was the lead guitarist in two of the Woodstock generation's great populist bands—Buffalo Springfield and Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young—and in a sense he is an exemplary living relic from rock's revolutionary past. He's a committed malcontent approaching middle age, as indeed the whole rock form is, pressured to abandon the obsessions he has struggled with for so long.

"Now we'd like to do a song about preserving our precious energy resources."

Clearly, Young is a haunted dreamer who finds the world disappointing. In the early Seventies, he was given to overtly political statements ("Ohio," which is about the Kent State shootings; "Southern Man"; "Alabama"), but his most consuming grievance has been with women, the source of his most powerful illusions and frustrations. Young's creative history is a study in stubborn temperament at war with reality.

He's been cultivating his introspective persona since the first Buffalo Springfield album was released, in 1966 (even then the liner notes tagged him as "deep and dark"). In the two quick years before the band broke up, after three albums, he consistently contributed achingly pretty melodies ("Expecting to Fly," "Broken Arrow"), and he wasn't at all shy about drenching them in string arrangements. He also displayed a knack for reflective lyrics that stand up better than most of the stoned wisdom of the era.

While other countercultural rockers protested their social and political disorientation, Young protested loneliness at the peak of the "free love" eruption, expressing feelings of displacement with dreamy, abstract images: "Where's that silhouette I'm trying to trace?"; "I'm bright enough to see you, you're just too dark to care"; "I wish I could have met you in a place where we both belonged."

They were consciousness-stretching lyrics that fit the adventurousness of the times, balancing his emotional commitments between this world and the next. Suicide didn't seem to be the idea. Young simply yearned for some vaguely imagined paradise out of time, like an overgrown Little Nemo impatient to escape to Slumberland.

After Buffalo Springfield disbanded, Young continued to indulge in the bliss of bereavement as a solo artist on the melancholy *Neil Young* (1968). But with *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere* (1969), he unveiled a new instrumental tone, a rangy, more muscular, "heavy country" style of playing. Although he didn't totally neglect the weepy tunes, numbers like "Down by the River," the title track, and "Cowgirl in the Sand" bristled with impatient, even

Continued on page 48

Stephen Demorest has written for Rolling Stone, *the* New York Daily News, *and* Crawdaddy.

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Theater

Cult of the Second-rate

by Martin Gottfried

BROADWAY was once America's only source of drama, and it did its job, presenting major new plays by such major new playwrights as O'Neill, Williams, and Miller. Today, things are different. When Broadway producers present dramas, they tend to do them either with commercial calculation or with earnest but old-fashioned taste. It has been left largely to our institutional theaters to present serious modern plays, but the problem is that the playwrights emerging from these theaters have made little impression on the national consciousness. Produced in the protected environment of subsidized theaters, these playwrights have been unmotivated to reach the general public. Three plays that opened in a single week in New York exemplify not only the dilemma but also a way out of it.

The commercially calculated production was a revival of *A Touch of the Poet*. Its producers tried to manufacture a salable commodity by combining a famous author (O'Neill) with an actor (Jason Robards) and a director (Jose Quintero) famously associated with him. The play itself is second-rate O'Neill; its plot, the stuff of soap opera. The vain, alcoholic, and frustrated Cornelius Melody fancies himself a Byronic figure. An Irishman with a British military past, Melody considers himself socially superior to the small-town Yankees around him, though he is but the proprietor of a failing inn. When his daughter falls in love with the scion of the local gentry, Melody reacts on two levels. Socially, he pretends that he will have to condescend to these American arrivistes. Financially, he smells a windfall—but his awakening is rude. The boy's family will have nothing to do with him or his daughter. In fact, they try to buy him off. It is then that Melody must face the shabbiness and falsity of his pretensions.

Ever since their acclaimed versions of *The Iceman Cometh* and *Long Day's Journey into Night* 20 years ago, Robards and Quintero have been cursed by O'Neill, tied to him by producers who consider the combination marketable. Neither is right for this play, and the production is so sluggish it seems to continue on only for perversity's sake. Robards is surely the great O'Neill actor of our time, but when he tries a high British accent, he is an actor with a hot potato. In his mouth.

Cold Storage exemplifies the kind of new play being done by the few dedicated producers who are still active on Broadway. Its author, Ronald Ribman, is one of our most talented young playwrights. He has had trouble being recognized even though he's already written two major works, *Harry, Noon and Night* and *Journey of the Fifth Horse*.

Cold Storage is set in the roof garden of a cancer hospital. Joseph Parmegian is a produce merchant who knows he is dying and copes with depression by needling a fellow patient. Richard Landau is his taciturn opposite in this basically two-character work (which in some ways resembles David Storey's *Home*). Landau, a dealer in fine art, has put his feelings in cold storage and refuses to acknowledge his illness. In matching these two, the play speaks of dealing with death by embracing life, but I'm afraid that when it gets down to philosophizing, it is as banal as most life-and-death plays ("the point is there is no point"). There are other things wrong with it: It irrelevantly argues that suavity doesn't equal intelligence (the refined Landau is uneducated, the crude Parmegian is erudite); it too vaguely connects Jewishness with survival; it hasn't a plot, which, most modern playwrights don't seem to realize, is of some necessity to drama; and it pushes too often for easy laughs. Yet there is a fine madness to Parmegian's free associating, an urgency to his love of life. Martin Balsam plays this refreshingly bizarre character superlatively. Len Cariou, an excellent actor, has less to find in Landau's character, but he has the stage power to keep Balsam from overwhelming the work.

While *Cold Storage* is a sincere commercial producer's mistaken notion of an important drama, *The Water Engine* is the choice of a knowing institutional producer (Joseph Papp). This is still another new play by David Mamet—his fifth in a year! It is a remarkable record, but then Mamet is a remarkable young playwright. He is an outright original, with a poet's ear for dialogue and a showman's knack for theatricality, and he has the sense of humanity that has been lacking among our playwrights. If Mamet has shown any weaknesses, they are in inventing stories, clarifying points, and developing material to full length.

The Water Engine is also brief—only an hour and a half long, including a 30-minute prologue—but it overcomes the author's other problems and presents a brilliant idea executed to perfection. The play is set in a 1935 broadcasting studio (the prologue is a female vocalist doing an audience warm-up). The program is part of a series called *Century of Progress*. The radio script is melodramatic in period style and yet engrossing: An inventor has come up with an engine that runs on water. The patent attorney he hires has a sinister partner who attempts to buy the engine for unidentified "interests," presumably people who will either abuse it or stifle it for commercial reasons. They murder the resisting inventor, but not before he passes on the plans for the engine to a youngster.

This story is told in a way that combines acting out with radio performance. It is also orchestrated to be played in counterpoint to a monologue read from a chain letter of the era, the sort that predicted fortune or calamity depending on whether or not the letter was continued. "All people are connected," the letter reads. "No one can call back what one man does." In this ingenious, satiric way, Mamet indicts the American system, just as he did in *American Buffalo*. We have had a "century of progress" because of individual idealism, not because of our industrial establishment but despite it. As the chain letter says, "Whatever happened to this nation... did it ever exist?... Our science is in ourselves."

The Water Engine is mesmerizing, even enthralling. Though its way is offbeat, its cumulative effect is one of basic theater. Its concerns are recognizably human and idealistic. Because of all this, it is a play that could reach a general public that many modern plays have failed to reach, and the general public must be reached if drama is to grow and thrive. We now have a chance to see just how that public responds, since *The Water Engine* moved to Broadway at the end of February. Whether such a play could have reached the commercial producers who cater to the mass public without Papp having found it for them first is another matter. ◉

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Television

Murder Most Foul

by Karl E. Meyer

THE MORE I see of it, the more I am convinced that the television "docudrama" is as inherently crooked as a camel's back. It is simply not possible to recycle recent real life events into prime time entertainment without the means' contaminating the end. The reshaping of history to suit what the trade calls "production values" constitutes an offense against truth itself, and it should be resisted, no matter how lofty the intention.

A case in point is the CBS docudrama *A Death in Canaan*, which tells the story of Peter Reilly, a Connecticut teen-ager found guilty of killing his mother. Held incommunicado by the police for 26 hours, Reilly signed a "confession" that he later disavowed but that nevertheless led a jury to convict him of first-degree manslaughter. In 1976, three years after the murder, the case was reopened and all charges against the boy were dismissed. (*A Death in Canaan* is due to be shown on Wednesday, March 1, from 9:00 to 11:30 P.M., EST, but network scheduling has been so erratic that a recheck of listings is advised.)

This is a stark and horrible story of manifest importance. It shows us the dark side of the law, which most police action shows either ignore or excuse. In this respect, *A Death in Canaan* performs an undoubted service by effectively illustrating how a weak-willed suspect can be led to confess to anything—including the murder of his mother.

When Peter Reilly returned to his Canaan home on the evening of September 28, 1973, he came upon the slashed and mangled body of his mother. Though there was not a mark of blood on the boy, he was regarded as the prime suspect and taken by the state police to Hartford. He volunteered to take a lie detector test and was informed that the polygraph was infallible (which it isn't).

A Death in Canaan draws on the verbatim transcript of Reilly's interrogation. The fatherless boy was told that he might have blacked out and forgotten the crime that the polygraph seemed to show he had committed. Exhausted both emotionally and physically, Reilly finally "confessed," though he still said he was not sure what had happened.

The program is a textbook example of what used to be accepted police procedure. In the words of Professor Fred E. Inbau, of Northwestern University Law School, "All confessions are based on trickery and deceit." Inbau was giving advice in 1959 to prosecuting attorneys taking a short course, and he went on to say:

> In dealing with emotional crimes—a shooting for instance—don't ask the suspect to admit it. Pat him on the shoulder and say, "Joe, where did you throw the gun?" Or the Why-did-it-happen approach: "Just got the better of you, huh, Joe?"... Give him an opportunity to explain, to justify it in his own words. So he'll say, "All right, I'll tell you," and it'll put him in the penitentiary.

In a series of landmark cases, the Supreme Court has tried to limit the use of trickery and deceit by police in extorting confessions from emotionally vulnerable suspects. But the practice persists, always with the excuse that only the guilty confess. In the case of Peter Reilly, the evidence was solidly against his having committed the crime to which he "confessed." The lessons of this case deserve to be pondered by a national audience.

Regrettably, *A Death in Canaan* is also a docudrama, with the familiar clichés of a bastard film form. Some of the characters are given their real names, others are rebaptized or are composites of several people, with little indication of where truth ends and fiction begins. Filmed in California and not New England, the program substitutes a phony Our Town folksiness for the grit of Connecticut, and the accents are hopelessly wrong.

These are minor blemishes. For the more serious defects, blame rests on the producers, Robert W. Christiensen and Rick Rosenberg, and on director Tony Richardson, of British film fame (*Tom Jones*), who here makes his American television debut. With the exception of Paul Clemens, who sensitively depicts Peter Reilly, the cast consists of comic book stereotypes of real life counterparts.

A Death in Canaan is based on a fine book of the same title by Joan Barthel, the enterprising free-lance writer who brought the Reilly case to national attention. In the film version, Barthel is transformed into a starlet, the lithe and winsome Stefanie Powers, apparently on the theory that a mass audience could never accept a heroine who is plain.

In reading Barthel's admirable book, I was struck by its thoughtful preface by novelist William Styron (one of the many notables who came to Reilly's aid). Styron describes the presiding judge, John Speziale, as humane, compassionate, and civilized. Renamed Judge Revere in the film and played by William Bronder, the magistrate comes across as an impersonal mediocrity who presses the jury to convict.

Of the police, Styron remarks that they were "nice" men who thought they were doing their duty. This immensely important fact does not come through in the more simpleminded film version. The state police lieutenant in charge of the investigation has the mien of a stormtrooper (he is called Lieutenant Bragdon and is played by Tom Atkins).

In short, this film on justice does not do justice to the truth. The caricaturist's crayon here supplants the writer's pencil, with its exact line.

The question I asked myself is why CBS did not produce a genuine documentary on the Reilly case, which could have been filmed in Connecticut rather than California and which would have given us a look at the real people involved in this troubling legal scandal. The culprit, I am certain, is Nielsen and his rating machines. Stefanie Powers playing Joan Barthel may generate a huge audience, while Joan Barthel playing herself represents a risk. Since the cause is noble, we are supposed to swallow our doubts about the gussied-up gimmickry of the docudrama. I refuse to do so. The form itself is pernicious, and despite my awareness of the futility of shouting at the wind, I urge that all such future projects be dropped forthwith. ◉

Answer to Middleton Double-Crostic No. 141

(David) McCullough:
(The) Path Between the Seas

The New York Times scarcely let a day pass without some new assault on the President and his "act of sordid conquest." Cartoons in the *World*... showed a brutish Rough Rider, armed to the teeth, pouncing on Panama or glowering down the barrel of an enormous cannon at a helpless little Colombia.

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The Movies

Chaplin's Flawed Successors

by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

THE DEATH of Charlie Chaplin provokes reflections about the state of humor in America. Among movie fans, to judge by the American Film Institute poll [*SR*, January 21], Chaplin is already forgotten. In this poll, citizens of the Republic, presumably sane, voted that *Gone with the Wind*, *Star Wars*, and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* were greater films than *Modern Times*, *City Lights*, *The Great Dictator*, and *Monsieur Verdoux*. One might conclude that our national sense of humor is in decay. I am not sure that this is so. After all, most critics—in my view, rightly—chose Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* as the best movie of 1977.

And Hollywood turns out comedies as assiduously as ever. This month's entries are both from 20th Century-Fox. The presiding geniuses are Mel Brooks, who produced, directed, wrote (with assistance), and played the lead in *High Anxiety*, and Gene Wilder, a chip from the Brooks workshop, who wrote, directed, and played the lead in *The World's Greatest Lover*. Both even contributed songs to their movies. All this, of course, is in the great tradition. Chaplin wrote, directed, produced, composed, and so forth. So does Woody Allen today. Name-dropping, however, is not in the tradition. Brooks dedicates his film to Alfred Hitchcock, "master of suspense." Wilder concludes his with a self-serving message of thanks to his "friend" Federico Fellini "for encouragement at just the right time."

Some comedians, like Chaplin, Fields, Groucho, Lahr, Ed Wynn, were intrinsically funny men. For all I know, they may have been grouches in their private lives; but the moment they appeared on stage or on screen, one began to laugh. Neither Brooks nor Wilder is intrinsically funny. This is not a fatal disqualification. There have been other comedians not wildly comical in themselves but possessed of a rueful conception of character and a capacity for droll invention that suffused their movies and made us laugh helplessly when we saw them—Harold Lloyd, for example, or Buster Keaton. Mel Brooks, one feels, is growing in this direction. Gene Wilder tries hard. Too hard.

High Anxiety is homage to Hitchcock. It offers spoofs of *Spellbound*, *Vertigo*, *Psycho*, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, *The Birds*. It also sends up a number of non-Hitchcock films, from *Blow Up* and *Frankenstein* to *The Wizard of Oz*. The kind of spunky, dumb character Ed Brophy used to play a generation ago reappears here played by Ron Carey; the character looks like, and is named, Brophy. *High Anxiety* is filled with such in jokes, many more of which I am sure eluded me. In jokes are a perishable item. Did Chaplin and Lloyd go in for in jokes? Who can tell anymore?

Mel Brooks is improbably cast as a Harvard professor of psychiatry and a Nobel Prize winner. He turns out to be a surprisingly ingratiating and skilled performer; very funny too, imitating Sinatra singing at a bar or, undone by his fear of heights, sliding along the inner wall on the top floor of the open stairwell of San Francisco's Hyatt Hotel. The parody of a Hitchcock plot is okay, though the talented Cloris Leachman is required to play the villainess rather in the style of the late Lionel Barrymore.

The trouble with Brooks is that he has imperfect taste. Most of the great comedians, Chaplin and the rest, have had excellent taste. Woody Allen today has flawless taste. Brooks's unevenness is exhibited even before we get through the titles. The opening sequence has an external shot of a descending airplane, with cheerful faces at each window until the camera reaches Brooks, a picture of total misery (very funny); then Brooks, disembarking and presenting the stewardess with a bag of vomit (very unfunny); then a manic woman hurling herself at him, so Brooks thinks with murderous intent, only to rush past and embrace another passenger (very funny); then a man in a trench coat summoning Brooks into the "toilet" and revealing himself as a homosexual on the prowl (not so funny). The bad taste has none of the epic, self-loathing quality that made Lenny Bruce, say, a cultural phenomenon. It is just a cheap sense of what makes people laugh: bird-droppings, for example; or S/M bondage; or lunatics.

Still, one can forgive a lot to a man who moves a camera into a room through a window, only to shatter the pane as it goes; or who permits a crescendo of music when a chauffeur whispers "foul play," only to display it as coming from a symphony orchestra traveling in a neighboring bus. For all his lapses, Brooks is a man of gifts; far more so, on this evidence, than his protégé.

Wilder is amiable and blameless but not naturally comical and inclined to make up in exertion what he lacks in inspiration. In his movie about a young man from the provinces trying to win a Rudolph Valentino contest in the Hollywood of silent pictures, he has two expressions—wounded astonishment and delirious self-esteem. He mugs tediously, as does his entire cast. He also pilfers shamelessly; but the assembly line scene was far funnier in *Modern Times*, and the screen tests, as well as the mistaken identity theme, were far funnier in Lloyd's *Movie Crazy*. Wilder tries so hard at slapstick that he almost wins sympathy. Alas, as Mark Twain said of his wife's attempts to swear, he has the words but not the tune. The audience, when I saw the film, watched it mostly in patient silence. Fellini may be a little promiscuous in dispensing encouragement these days. ◉

Wit Twister No. 113

Edited by Arthur Swan

The object of the game is to complete the poem by thinking of one word whose letters, when rearranged, will yield the appropriate word for each series of blanks. Each dash within a blank corresponds to a letter of the word. Answers on page 53.

Alone, he downs his — — — — — and his steak,

Then goes to face his triumph's — — — — — and din.

How — — — — — the crowd assembled for his sake!

How grand the — — — — — march that plays him in!

This — — — — — welcome makes him wryly view

His life as some pat — — — — — tale come true. A.S.

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Booked for Travel

Baghdad on the Thames

Peter Marlow/Sygma

Arab visitor at a London market—"Their shopping list includes the hotels themselves."

by Horace Sutton

WHATEVER PROBLEMS may be encountered by those Arabs who live on the West Bank of the Jordan, other disciples of Allah are having no trouble encamping in force in the West End of London. Those upper-middle-class sheikhs who once roistered in Beirut before it became a revolutionary shooting gallery have long since elected to dispense their favors in London's spiffiest neighborhood. The West End, and particularly Park Lane, has become a playland where visiting Arabs sift through the expensive boutiques, browse in the Rolls-Royce showrooms where lavender limousines are displayed with signs printed in Arabic, and engage vast suites of rooms in the city's best hotels. Their shopping list has included some of the hotels themselves. Of the elegant cluster of Park Lane hotels—the two-year-old Inter-Continental, the small Londonderry, the Hilton, the Grosvenor House, the Dorchester, and the Inn on the Park—one, the Dorchester, is already in Arab hands.

At tea there the other day, the waiters in tailcoats were bustling about as always, carrying trays of sweet tarts and setting down pots of steaming brew, the lifeblood of the British. There was no outward evidence of Arab ownership, but according to a British friend, that was to be expected. "They buy the hotels and then make sure no other Arabs come there," he said. The line was delivered as an off-the-cuff snippet of blasphemy that should not be accepted as ordinary Arab modus. If anything, the Arabs here tend to keep a low profile in their financial arrangements; they bought the Chelsea Hotel and then turned it over to Holiday Inns to run. Somewhat more harrowing was the Arab purchase of the Carlton Tower, allegedly even while Prime Minister Begin of Israel was asleep inside.

The Arabs' private presence in London, as apart from their financial investments, often seems bizarre, especially played against the backdrop of this supercivilized settlement on the Thames. The hotel managers are sometimes placed in difficult straits trying to accommodate a sheikh who arrives at the head of a sizable entourage. Arabs from the Gulf states are as punctilious in living according to religious dictate as they are by seasoned custom. Wife or wives must be installed on a different floor from the paterfamilias, and a meeting room must be arranged somewhere in between. A common room for bodyguards and other functionaries also needs to be set aside. And then there is the matter of special dietary requirements.

Some sheikhs, and other Arab males of high social station, arrange quarters for their families in Park Lane hotels and then lease a separate suite for themselves in another part of town. The men have the run of the city, and the women and the children are left to behold the Disneyland of the city: elevators coming and going, splendid horse guards riding past hotel windows, and the flow of buses, cabs, limousines, and people coursing the boulevards. The children sent downstairs to the kiosk for purchases of gum or candy are given crisp bills with which to pay, but they often disdain the change. Stories accrue of "fivers"—five-pound notes—found in the gutter, dropped, possibly disdainfully, when handed as change by a cabby. There are even gaudier tales of Arabs who arrive in London, buy a Rolls or a Bentley, and upon leaving again for home give it to the chauffeur. The word is, or so says a London Arab watcher, to use a Rolls while abroad in Britain, but go back to a Cadillac at home.

That stretch of rarified London between Wellington Arch and Marble Arch, which marks the limits of Park Lane, has become such a popular neighborhood for visiting Arabs that a newsstand strategically placed along the byway carries over 20 journals printed in Arabic. There is not an English, French, German, Italian, Greek, Japanese, or American paper among them.

What brings the Middle Eastern visitors to this particular quarter are the fine hotels, which now occupy much of the eastern fringe of Hyde Park, and, of course, the proximity to Piccadilly, Regent Street, Bond Street, and Grosvenor and Berkeley squares, all of them a modest walk in decent weather.

The latest American-managed entry along this newly developed hotel row, the London Inter-Continental, has landed on the most advantageous site of all, right at Hyde Park Corner. Some rooms face the heroic Wellington Arch, and at 10:45 each morning—for those still lolling about their hotel rooms—the Household Cavalry in shiny, plumed helmets, swords at the shoulder, ride past the south face of the hotel en route to the changing of the guard at Whitehall.

The Wellington Arch, with all its fluted columns and cornices, is topped by the Quadriga, a two-wheeled Roman chariot representing war, into which a winged bronze figure (Peace) has seemingly just landed. Of course Peace didn't *just* land, for the statue has been in place, both maligned and adored, since 1912. It replaced an even more controversial equestrian

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statue of Wellington, a work so large that a dinner party for eight was held inside it.

The Inter-Continental has adopted the Quadriga as its trademark, and the charging horses and the winged Peace—crown of olive branches held aloft—appear on all its letterheads and envelopes. It was the eighth duke of Wellington who came to open the hotel in September 1975, having been invited by its owner, the Apsley Park Hotel Company Limited, to award the hotel a royal, neighborly blessing.

The Wellington connection is apt enough, for in 1817, then a commander of international celebrity, Wellington bought an extravagant domicile called Apsley House, a mansion bearing the august address, Number One, London. It stands, even more extravagantly expanded by Wellington, behind the Inter-Continental.

Only two years after Waterloo and still in the flush of victory, Wellington set about refurbishing Apsley House, preparing it, possibly without realizing it, for the historical role it would ultimately command as a museum of artifacts recalling Europe's ultimate triumph over Napoleon. There is at hand every personal necessity for every human foible that even supreme commanders must endure—boxes of pills, razors and scissors, shaving gear and toothbrushes, as well as penciled orders on parchment skin, all of them Wellington's.

Every year, from 1830 until 1852, reunions of Waterloo veterans were held in the Waterloo Gallery, with the banquet table laid with its Portuguese dinner service, a gift of the Portuguese prince regent, in 1814. The heroic paintings on one wall face the windows that were flung open to accept the trees of Hyde Park perfuming the June night on which the reunion was held.

Wellington did not, like an old soldier, fade away. He became both statesman and, in 1828, prime minister. After the Second World War, the seventh duke of Wellington gave Apsley House and its rich possessions to the nation, and the place was turned over to the Victoria and Albert Museum to administer.

Of the great mansions of Mayfair—Wellington's aside—the last imposing one is Baron Leopold Rothschild's Florentine flat, which, as a classy gambling club known as Les Ambassadeurs, is now a neighbor to the Inter-Continental. Les Ambassadeurs's bar is the baron's old library; there is dancing in the dining room, a sauna and massage room, and a barber's salon that clips members only.

Not every branch of the Inter-Continental chain would have fit into this neighborhood, but this edition of the Pan American subsidiary does so with extraordinary verve and style. That the builders refrained from sending some soaring, oppressive tower into the sky alongside Number One, London deserves some commendation in itself; but the refinement of the rooms, the views over the historic corner, and the appointments of the house itself are extraordinary, coming as they do in a time when flash often wins over taste.

Le Soufflé, the Inter-Continental's signal effort in regal dining, would be the vortex of social stir had it opened as a private London restaurant, that is, not part of a hotel. It is, in kitchen and in design, the quintessence of taste, the soufflés themselves coming in an assortment of flavors, to say very little of creations like Scotch salmon sautéed in butter with sorrel sauce and veal scallops filled with a lobster mousse.

Being a Pan American subsidiary, the hotel makes a special effort to have its concierge handle air reservations with aplomb. FTs, an airline handle for frequent foreign travelers, get special attention from Pan Am and on the London run, anyway, are often put in the tourist section, immediately behind first class, an enclave normally free of babies, birds, cats, and similar impedimenta. Making the transatlantic run the other day, the crew outdid themselves with esprit, crowning one of the best transatlantic crossings in memory with tea, crumpets, and Devonshire cream. That was before the decision on the new route case, which gave, among other things, Dallas-London to Braniff; and one wonders if the crews can maintain their high sense of morale in the face of losing sought-after routes to what many think are political pressures.

Braniff is offering Dallas-London nonstop with a leased 747 and hopes to work an interchange permitting Concorde service, Dallas-Washington-London, a tough act to follow.

When all the interested Arab airlines, now so large a presence in London, win transatlantic routes, the competition will be even tougher. Saudia is a little stiff-necked, and although it operates five 747 flights a week to Riyadh from London, it doesn't serve a drop of liquor. During fast periods, the food service is curtailed. But that doesn't go with Alia, The Royal Jordanian Line operated with the Syrians. (It already flies nonstop New York to Jordan). Jazziest of all is Gulf Air, which flies L-1011 Tri Stars in low configurations—40 seats in first class and 171 in economy. Among the amenities: a flying boutique, a stand-up bar, flying secretaries, and gold leather throne chairs in first class. Gulf Air is owned jointly by Qatar, Muscat, and the other United Arab Emirates. It has 16 flights from London to the Gulf every week, landing at Bahrein, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Dubai, Muscat. No fasting here. Ten-course dinners with seated service at tables for eight.

The old Arab watchers, and the British have certainly developed plenty of them, say that the rush began after the civil war closed Beirut, the Arabs choosing London because many had been schooled in England and because they knew they would be treated well here. In Paris, the story is quite different. Despite the official government position toward the Middle East, "Arab" has always suggested a faint air of derogation about it, summoning images of rug peddlers from North Africa.

This is not to say that there are not jokes and asides in the British papers, and jibes aplenty. But there is no bitterness. What attracts Arab men to London, so my own Arab watcher reports, is the availability of sex and of specialized medical checkups. Routine examinations are in huge demand, especially at Wellington Hospital, where the administration must cope with the singular wants of the patients and the physical presence of the bodyguards, too.

Besides everything else, Arab visitors like the climate in London, and who can be unfriendly toward a visitor who enjoys what everyone else has been complaining about for centuries? ◉

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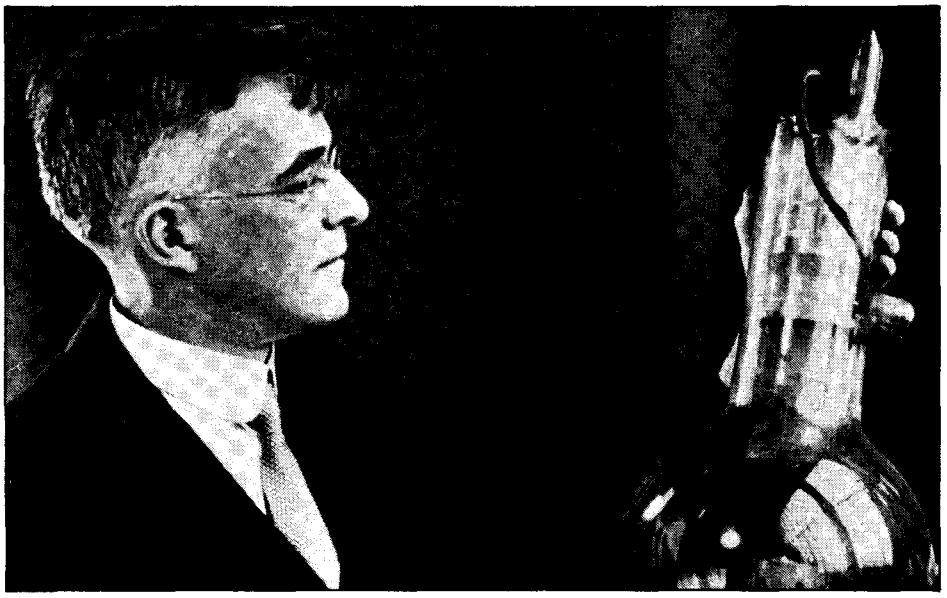
Scienceletter

Introducing Dr. Irving *Who?*



Langmuir, with early gas-filled electronic tube–"A scientist difficult to categorize."

by Albert Rosenfeld

AS THE BIOGRAPHER of Irving Langmuir, I was pleased a few years ago to be invited to spend a Saturday evening as the moderator of a panel of distinguished scientists gathered at the Stony Brook campus of the State University of New York to discuss his work. The meeting would be held, I was told, at Langmuir College. How nice, I thought, to see recognition extended to this great but underadmired scientist, to sit in what I assumed was a college of science named after him, and to hear biologist H. Bentley Glass, Nobel physicist C. N. Yang, and Langmuir's former colleague Vincent J. Schaefer review his accomplishments before an audience of appreciative students.

Langmuir College, alas, turned out to be not an instructional college at all but rather a dormitory (a *residential* college, in the British tradition). Attendance at our program was disappointingly sparse. And the students who did show up were for the most part rather hostile; at least the vocal ones were. The Vietnam War was then still on, and science was associated in their minds with nasty things: napalm, defoliants, pollution. Moreover, irony upon irony, I was informed that the students had wanted to name their dorm Harpo Marx College, and they resented being overruled by the administration—and having a *scientist's* name foisted upon them at that!

If a contest were held to select the greatest American scientist, a good case could be made for Irving Langmuir. Yet among American lay people, even those who are educated and cultivated, Langmuir remains almost unheard of. What is it, I wonder, that brings some scientists to the attention of the public but leaves so many others who have achieved as much or more unheard of? For instance, I would have expected my biography, first published in 1962 (and only in England), to be by now but one of several biographies of Langmuir; yet it is still the only one that exists. It can't be that the public is totally uninterested in scientific types because new biographies do keep appearing about men like Einstein, Edison, and Oppenheimer.

It's not that I expect people, even my best friends, to have read the book, especially since there has never been an American edition. Nor am I too surprised that the magnitude of Langmuir's contributions to science and technology is not fully appreciated. But I never quite get over my dismay at how few people of my acquaintance know *anything* about Langmuir—or even recognize his name. Only now and then does the topic somehow arise in conversation. When it does, part of the dialogue will typically go something like this:

"Oh—a biography! Of whom?"

"Irving Langmuir."

And I can nearly always count on: "Irving *Who?*"

I usually say the name again and spell it. Then I take note of the other person's pleading look that says, Aren't you going to give me a clue? So I explain that Langmuir was a great though never very well-known scientist ("Oh, yes, of course!"), and as a rule, we quickly move on to some other subject.

I have had similar experiences even among college faculty members—on occasions, for instance, when I have been introduced as a lecturer or panelist. Sooner or later, someone says, "Oh, I didn't know you had written a biography." We then wind up with the "Irving *Who?*" number again. I have heard it so often that I sometimes catch *myself* thinking of Langmuir as Irving Who.

COULD LANGMUIR'S relative anonymity be due to his industrial background—the fact that he spent most of his productive years working at the General Electric Research Laboratory rather than at, say, Harvard or Berkeley? That explanation won't do. One only has to think of Charles Proteus Steinmetz, the electrical engineering genius who gained his comparative renown while also working at GE—and he didn't even win the Nobel Prize, as Langmuir did (chemistry, 1932). Very few people can tell you what Steinmetz *did*, but they are somehow familiar with the eccentric, hunchbacked genius of Schenectady. Perhaps it was his very "deformity" that fixed him in people's minds—as was perhaps the case with, say, Toulouse-Lautrec—whereas Langmuir was so "normal" physically. In fact, Langmuir was a vigorous outdoorsman (he was among the first to introduce skiing to this country) who once walked 52 miles in a single day and who climbed the Matterhorn after he was forty, with virtually no preliminary conditioning.

One handicap in terms of Langmuir's public visibility is the fact that he was not associated with any single major theory, discovery, or breakthrough. There are a few esoteric items that bear his name—for instance, the Langmuir probe (for studying ionized gases) and the Langmuir isotherm (a method for analyzing the way molecules cling to surfaces)—but he produced nothing like the Einstein theory or the Salk vaccine. Though he developed the gas-

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filled incandescent lamp, which still sells by the hundreds of millions every year and saves American consumers millions of dollars on their light bills, it was Edison who captured the popular imagination by inventing *the* incandescent lamp, the very first. In addition, Langmuir did superb research during two world wars. In World War I, he helped develop submarine detection devices that proved effective against German U-boats. In World War II, he worked out methods by which aircraft flying at high altitudes could deice their dangerously encrusted wings; and his smoke generators laid down protective smoke screens that were credited with saving countless thousands of Allied soldiers and civilians, on land and sea, from enemy bombardment. Unfortunately, he was not "the father" of anything—of the A-bomb, like Oppenheimer, or of the H-bomb, like Teller.

Langmuir, in a word, was difficult to categorize—which always makes people uncomfortable. Though his Nobel was in chemistry, for example, he was also a physicist who made contributions to a number of other sciences. And for good measure he invented a few new sciences—among them, plasma physics and surface chemistry. (His original degree, from Columbia, was in metallurgical engineering!) Like most great scientists, he had bursts of tremendous creative productivity in his twenties and early thirties. But unlike most, he kept having such bursts throughout his forties, fifties, sixties, and seventies. And whereas most scientists have traditionally been either theorists or applied scientists, Langmuir was a magnificent example of both. He left behind a body of achievement that for sheer diversity, for sheer quantity of quality, has not been surpassed by any other single genius in our nation's history.

It may be that Langmuir did too much. Some members of his scientific fan club claim that if Langmuir's accomplishments had been divided up and passed around, there would have been more than enough to endow each of a dozen lesser scientists with a distinguished career. He was, as mentioned above, the first to deal with plasmas (he coined the word), those turbulent aggregations of ionized gas whose strange electrical and magnetic properties have caused them to be called the "fourth state of matter." In the course of these pioneering studies, Langmuir introduced the concept of electron temperature and set the stage for new investigations in electron physics and astrophysics. He also prepared the way for the new discipline called magnetohydrodynamics (MHD), which was to become so critical to technologies ranging from plasma-jet engines to controlled thermonuclear fusion. The Hungarian physicist Dennis Gabor once declared that if Langmuir had done nothing else, his work in plasma physics alone would have earned him greatness.

Yet look at what else Langmuir did: He was the first to isolate hydrogen in its atomic form. He gave the first satisfactory explanations of such phenomena as thermionic emission (the stream of electrically charged particles given off by hot metals) and space charge (the cloud of charged particles that gathers in the space between two electrodes). He invented the mercury-condensation vacuum pump, the atomic-hydrogen welding torch, the thoriated tungsten filament. He put forth the octet theory of atomic structure, which brilliantly explained the physical and chemical characteristics of atoms better than had any model before it. (Though its success was short-lived—it finally could not account for some of the atom's dynamic, quantum mechanics aspects—it is still considered by some to be Langmuir's crowning intellectual feat.)

None of this takes into account the marvelously original series of experiments in surface chemistry that won him the Nobel Prize. The peculiar way that many substances behave at surfaces had interested other scientists before him, to be sure, but it was Langmuir who converted the field into a full-fledged scientific discipline. Surfaces to him were not merely the exterior limits of things. They were all interfaces where boundaries come together, whether in solids, liquids, or gases. He elucidated the nature of adsorption (versus absorption). He discovered monolayers—surface films that are only a single atom or a single molecule thick, a bizarre world with only two-dimensional properties. And as he worked, he kept finding ways to put his new knowledge to practical use.

It was only late in life that Langmuir enjoyed a brief spell of celebrity, even notoriety, when he became the first of the artificial-rain makers, seeding clouds with Dry Ice and silver iodide (even then, that was all people knew about him). During that period he created many a storm in meteorology (another science where he was a trespasser), if not in the atmosphere. He thought he had affected large-scale weather patterns across the entire eastern United States; and the air force believed that by using his techniques, it had successfully diverted hurricanes. But to this day, the whole subject of weather modification and its validity remains enveloped in such a haze of ambiguity that we still cannot evaluate Langmuir's contributions.

It is a commentary on our times that despite his 1932 Nobel Prize, despite the 22 major honors and medals awarded to him (several of them by foreign nations), and despite his 15 honorary doctorates, Langmuir remains good old Irving Who.

I HAVE a favorite theory as to why Langmuir is not better known: He had it too easy. He was too happy. There was too little drama or conflict in his life to make him really interesting (a theory reinforced by remarks made to me by a couple of publishers some years back). Langmuir's parents and family were supportive. He had a happy childhood. He stayed happily married—even faithful—to one woman all his life. He was sane and stable. He was never involved in a scandal. He worked contentedly at one job most of his life—and why not?

When Langmuir started working at the GE lab in 1909, after a short stretch of teaching, the main instruction he got from the lab's director, Willis Whitney, was, "Have fun." Whitney was canny enough to know that what was fun for Langmuir would eventually be profitable for GE. It was one of the best gambles the company ever made.

Langmuir was actually permitted by GE to do whatever he pleased, to go wherever he wished in the world, and was given essentially lifetime security and tenure. Wherever Langmuir went, whatever he was doing, he was also doing science. A conversation on a flight with his friend Lindbergh would lead him to develop improved airport beacons. Listening, as the guest of his friend Stokowski, to the Philadelphia Orchestra rehearse *Le Sacre du printemps*, he would suggest ways for RCA Victor to make a better recording of it and then work with Stokowski to improve the whole sound system. Langmuir was simply a happy man who spent a long life having an all-around wonderful time—and doing great science all the way.

Happiness, serenity, stability, sanity, brilliance, unflagging energy and curiosity, excellent health—together with an absence of any tempestuous extracurricular romances, sibling rivalries, scandals, visible handicaps, or struggles against poverty or chronic disease—these were the qualities that characterized Langmuir. Such an uninteresting man! Such a dull life! It is no wonder then that hardly anybody has heard of Irving Who. ◉

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Rock *from page 40*

vengeful, lyrics and stinging whip-snap guitar licks that cut to the bone. Obviously, in anger he'd found something to cauterize his bleeding heart.

Following this staunch effort, though, his third and fourth albums seemed depressingly woebegone. Young's piercing, thin voice has always sounded strained, a quality that can effectively convey urgency. But on the slack-spirited *After the Goldrush* (1970), the shrillness came painfully close to whining. *Harvest* (1972), laced with the plaintive cry of the pedal-steel guitar, was more comfortable to the ear but hardly more encouraging; the majority of his laments seemed gloomily resigned to unfulfillment.

Time soon brought changes, however, to both rock and Neil Young. The revolution was over, the cultural "war" was won, and with the rise of glitter and "heavy metal" showmen, a younger, slicker generation stole the spotlight. The veterans of Woodstock quickly grew into elders of their subculture—retiring, marrying, and maturing. Two factors conspired to snap Neil Young's concentration on self-indulgence at this time: a long-term relationship with a woman who gave him a home and a child, and the death by drug overdose of two close friends.

Artistically, the change was reflected by *Tonight's the Night*, recorded in late 1973 (though not released until 1975), and by *On the Beach* (1974). "Mellow My Mind" showed a new, mature contentment as Young wrote of being "satisfied with the fish on the line" and "a situation that can casualize your mind." He hadn't exactly become a homebody (the beautiful "Albuquerque" noted, "I've been starving to be alone"), but for the first time, his spirit seemed braced and calmed by a companionship that countered his isolation.

Additionally, the loss of his friends aroused Young's righteous anger and, with it, the hard-edged musicianship rarely heard since his second album. In the heroic tradition of Gary Cooper in *High Noon* and of James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause*, Young, rising to adversity—finally a man with a cause—seemed to steel his spirit and to resolve that he wasn't going to "take it" anymore.

Zuma (1975) is a tough-minded, occasionally misogynic collection powered by brawling love/hate numbers like "Barstool Blues" and "Stupid Girl." *American Stars 'n Bars* (1977) is less pugnacious but equally indomitable. Two tracks especially—each unraveling the free-form electric soloing that is Young's most commanding voice—express his frustration with such clarity that they rank among the most extraordinary pieces in rock.

"Like a Hurricane" is a ferocious maelstrom that reeks of voltage. The guitar lines swirl like live wires, shattering the air with blasting cap explosions and ricochets that speckle the song with the gritty flavor of cordite. Sizing up his situation uncompromisingly, Young sings, "You are like a hurricane/There's calm in your eye/I want to love you, but I'm getting blown away."

However, many rock observers consider that the ultimate guitar solo, the rock equivalent of a Shakespearean soliloquy, occurs in "Cortez the Killer." A throbbing, spiraling dream song, it achieves an excruciatingly poignant trance effect as Young sings of the distant golden age of the Aztecs under the benevolent Montezuma. Then in a startling fusion of personal tragedy and social history, Young suddenly injects himself into the mythic fabric he's woven: "And I know she's living there/ And she loves me to this day/ And I still can't remember when or how I lost my way." As the guitar continues to bleed through the echoing track, he goes on to indict modern civilization (in the figure of the trusted but ultimately treacherous Cortez) for displacing the more perfect world of his imagination. It's an outrageously bold metaphor, a finely balanced, mind-altering stretch through time, and the epiphany of his career.

Since that catharsis a couple of years ago, Young seems to have exercised an honest objectivity vis-à-vis his illusions, making them work for, rather than against, him. In the peaceful "Will to Love," his best recent song, he identifies with the salmon that instinctively searches out its spawning grounds and death. But if Young realizes he's fated to pursue the ephemeral ceaselessly, at least his decade of wrestling for perspective appears to have won him a grudging acceptance of the world he's stuck with.

No doubt he will always pick at the scabs on his emotions, keeping in touch with the old wounds, just as rock music, with its punks and pretenders, continues to cultivate its outlaw image well into a prosperous middle age. Like most rock stars of his generation, though, Young has learned which laws of nature won't bend. And it's unlikely that he'll be deceived by himself anymore. ◉

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Light Refractions

The Underground Grammarian

by Thomas H. Middleton

I RECENTLY DISCOVERED a powerful little Force for Good—an extraordinary monthly publication called *The Underground Grammarian*. I owe my thanks to Mary Louise Gilman, the editor of the *National Shorthand Reporter*, for sending me a copy of the January 1978 issue. I read it and immediately wrote, asking for back copies, to Richard Mitchell, who is a professor of English at Glassboro State College, Glassboro, New Jersey, and who is the body, soul, and mind behind *The Underground Grammarian*. He writes most of it, and he does so with intelligence, wit, and an admirable determination to stomp all over the toes of people—especially his fellow educators—who produce pretentious, sloppy writing. He names names, exposes the criminals and their crimes, and, I feel sure, makes a few enemies along the way.

He also prints his brainchild at home on what he says is an old, beat-up press. He does a remarkably imaginative job of it. He prints 1,200 to 1,400 copies a month and sends them free to whoever is lucky enough to be on his list. He doesn't want paying subscribers or big contributions, but you and I know that the cost of paper and stamps can run into a bundle, so I plan to send a check for a pittance to him at *The Underground Grammarian*, Post Office Box 203, Glassboro, New Jersey 08028.

None of the material appearing in *The Underground Grammarian* is under copyright, and Mitchell is delighted to have his work reprinted and disseminated far and wide.

The front page of the April 1977 issue has a brief essay called "Get Thee to a Library":

> To our shame, we must tell our readers on other campuses a sad truth: Glassboro State College is not the citadel of learning that it must seem to those whose impressions of it come from *The Underground Grammarian*. We have, for instance, no library. We have a learning resources center.
>
> Names count. Something happens in the frequenter of libraries that doesn't happen in the utilizer of learning resources centers. The one takes water from a spring; the other checks out with a six-pack of Diet Pepsi.
>
> Administrators who think of themselves as "managers" and think of schooling as "production" know that a mind is at last overthrown by repeated cant. If we form the habit of calling a library a name that smacks of a place where transmissions are repaired, then we will come to believe that the nurture of the mind and the repair of the transmission are qualitatively similar, and that educated people can be *produced*. This is false.
>
> Good teachers may guide and impel, but educated people are all self-educated, having read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested many books. Many have actually become educated without filmstrips and thus learned to write good English along the way.

On the back page of the same issue, under the heading "Brief Notes," he says, "We are glad to report that culprits ridiculed by *The Underground Grammarian* are being ridiculed on other campuses... from Boston to Berkeley and from Minnesota to LSU. Be comforted, therefore, if we expose you in print; think of the free publicity! How pleasant, at a conference in Kansas City, to find that strangers recognize your name." At the bottom of the page is the comment, "Horrible examples gratefully accepted."

I, too, am grateful for the many dozens of horrible examples that have been sent to me during the past few years. I've usually given anonymity to the authors of the junk writing I've quoted, but I think that in the future, I'll be less kind, particularly when the crimes have been committed by educators. That sort of kindness, I fear, has been misplaced.

I've had on file for more than two years a copy of a letter written by the chairman of a high school English department. I think it might be dirty pool to expose the man at this late date, but I wish I'd done so earlier. The letter is two pages of fetid garbage containing, among other abominations, this sentence (at least I assume it was intended as a sentence, since it starts with a capital and ends with a period): "The attenuation of this interchange demeans the role of those delegated by you to seek harmoniously the pertinent goals to achieve a satisfactory blend of understanding *now* must be noted."

That is such an unintelligible gallimaufry that it defies rational criticism. There's nowhere you can grab it.

Anyone who can perpetrate that sort of prose not only should *not* be the chairman of a high school English department, he should be forbidden by law to come within a quarter of a mile of a young, impressionable mind.

I wish we could sentence people who write that way to a year in a small room with only a light and the complete works of, say, Mark Twain, E. B. White, James Thurber, and a few others—there are, blessedly, many from whom to choose: Red Smith? George Orwell? Mencken? Lewis Carroll? No. Too complicated. Save them for later.

I think that after the culprits recovered from the initial shock of sudden exposure to grace and clarity in writing, they might actually begin to understand, and maybe even appreciate, the English language. Without filmstrips.

Right on, Mitchell! The gloves are off, and it's bare knuckles from now on. ◉

"Know something I figured out? Every time one of those waves comes in, it costs me thirty-nine cents!"

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tions, embarrassments, misfortunes, and losses of reputation and livelihood.

As for a U.S. press council, the National News Council has been financed and supported by the Twentieth Century Fund, which is neither conservative nor antipress. Neither have been the first workings of the council, which is supported by many in the press and broadcasting and which has no connection with the government. Its purpose is to conduct quiet private investigations of controversial press or broadcasting decisions and to report publicly on whether or not those decisions were taken responsibly and on reasonable grounds. The council has no power, other than the force of its disapproval, to penalize news organizations.

Concerned journalists have argued that the press and broadcasting ought to cooperate wholeheartedly with the News Council. Most news organizations, they say, would have nothing to fear; and it would be better for those who might be culpable to be censured by a private group with press interests at heart than by unsympathetic courts or legislatures. Besides, say the advocates, by certifying in most disputed cases that editorial decisions had been responsibly and reasonably taken, the council would more often reassure the public than threaten the press.

In short, these journalists view the News Council as a good public relations instrument for the press. Not only would news organizations appear to be trying to police their own work and that of colleagues but most would periodically be given a good bill of health by a respected panel of citizens, while irresponsible publications and broadcasts would be sternly reprimanded by a council backed by the press itself.

But there is another underlying reason why there has been considerable press support for the News Council. Seldom stated outside newsrooms, journalism classes, or press club bars, it is that the News Council idea offers a safe way to "clean up the press before the government comes in and does it for us." This suggests that even many who are themselves deeply involved in American journalism believe that there are so many excesses and malpractices that need to be cleaned up that the press really does face possible governmental control. And that points straight to the fundamental reason why I personally am opposed to the News Council, to more restrictive privacy and libel laws, and to all other schemes for enforcing the responsibility of a supposedly free press—reasonable as some of these schemes undoubtedly appear in their proposals for only limited sacrifices of freedom.

The overwhelming conclusion I have drawn from my life in journalism—nearly 30 years so far, from the *Sandhill Citizen* to *The New York Times*—is that the American press, powerful as it unquestionably is and protected though it may be by the Constitution and the laws, is not often "robust and uninhibited" but is usually timid and anxious—for respectability at least as much as for profitability. Those whose idea of the press is bounded by the exploits of Woodward and Bernstein on the one hand and by the Pentagon Papers on the other do not usually understand that such remarkable efforts as these—whether or not they are viewed as necessary or excessive—are limited exceptions to long-established practice.

"The American press...is usually timid and anxious—for respectability at least as much as for profitability."

Undoubtedly, in the more than a decade since Dwight Eisenhower roused the Goldwaterites with his attack on "sensation-seeking columnists," the press has become more activist and challenging, particularly in covering politics and government—though *not* business and financial institutions. On the evidence of press performance in that decade—the disclosure of duplicity and ineptitude in Vietnam; the exposure of political corruption in the Nixon administration; the demonstration of grave threats to American liberty by the "Imperial Presidency," the FBI, the CIA, and other security agencies—I assert the necessity to encourage the developing tendency of the press to shake off the encumbrance of a falsely objective journalism and to take an adversary position toward the most powerful institutions of American life.

By "adversary position," I don't mean a necessarily hostile position; I use the word in the lawyer's sense of cross-examining, testing, challenging, the merits of a case in the course of a trial. Such an adversary is opposed only in the sense that he or she demands that a case be made: the law stated, the facts proven, the assumptions and conclusions justified, the procedure squared with common sense and good practice. An adversary press would hold truth—unattainable and frequently plural as it is—as its highest value and knowledge as its first responsibility.

Such a press should be encouraged in its independence, not investigated—even by its friends—when it asserts that independence. A relatively toothless News Council that nevertheless could summon editors and reporters, notes and documents, film and outtakes, in order to determine publicly whether editorial decisions had been properly made *by the News Council's standards* would be bound to have an ultimately inhibiting effect on editors, publishers, and broadcasters—not all of whom would therefore be dismayed. Most, it's safe to say, would rather be praised for someone else's idea of responsibility than risk being questioned or criticized for their own independence.

Somewhat similarly, tighter libel and privacy laws would surely narrow the area open to editorial judgment—and some editors and publishers might welcome such laws just for that reason. Some might even yearn privately for an Official Secrets Act because its proscriptions would relieve them of having to decide such difficult questions as whether or not to publish so-called national security stories and of the loud accusations of irresponsibility that inevitably follow such decisions, no matter how they are made.

My belief is that the gravest threat to freedom of the press is not necessarily from public animosity or mistrust, legislative action or court decision. Certainly, even though absolute press freedom may sometimes have to accommodate itself to other high constitutional values, the repeal or modification of the First Amendment seems unlikely. At least as great a threat, I believe, comes from the press itself—in its longing for a respectable place in the established political and economic order, in its fear of the reaction that boldness and independence will always evoke. Self-censorship silences as effectively as a government decree, and we have seen it far more often.

In the harsh sunlight of a robust freedom, after all, nothing stands more starkly exposed than the necessity to decide and to accept the responsibility for decision. If the true freedom of the press is to decide for itself what to publish and when to publish it, the true responsibility of the press must be to assert that freedom.

But my life in journalism has persuaded me that the press too often tries to guard its freedom by shirking its responsibility and that this leads to default on both. What the press in America needs is less inhibition, not more restraint. ◉

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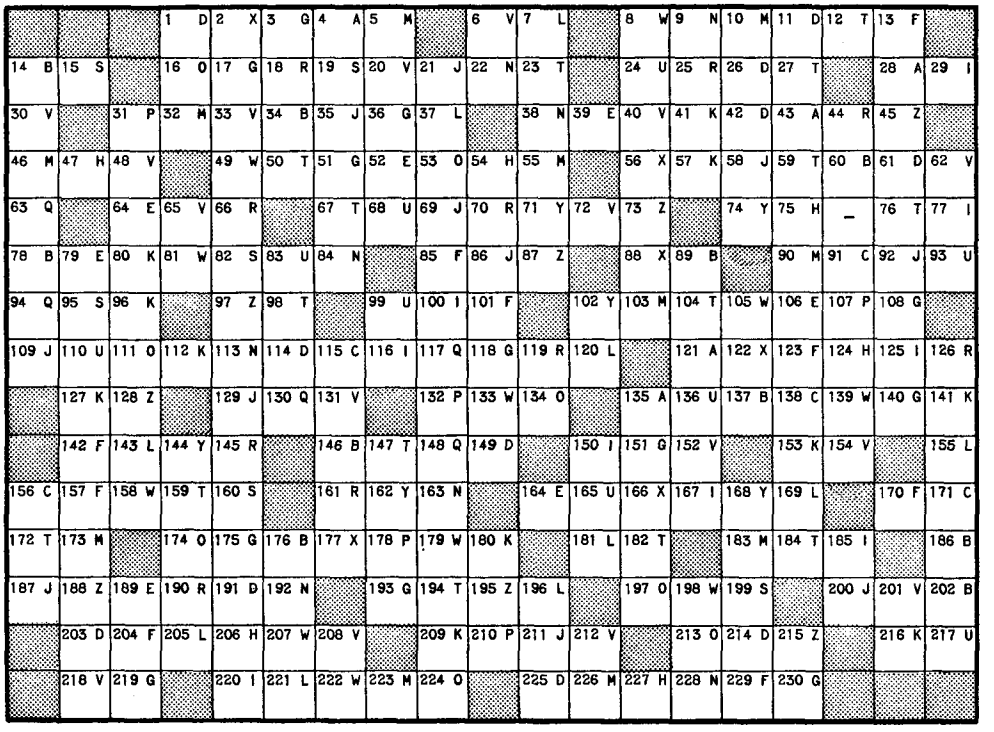
Double-Crostic

by Thomas H. Middleton



Number 142

Instructions

If you've never solved one of these puzzles, it will probably look much more difficult than it actually is. If you *can answer only a very few of the* WORDS correctly, you're on your way to solving the puzzle.

Fill in the numbered blanks of all the WORDS you can guess and write the letter of each numbered blank in its correspondingly numbered square in the diagram. The letters printed in the upper-right-hand corners of the squares indicate from what WORD a particular square's letter comes.

The diagram, when filled in, should read as a quotation from a published work. The dark squares are the spaces between words. If there is no dark square at the end of a line, a word may carry over to the line below.

The first letter of each WORD, reading down, will spell the name of the author and the title of the work from which the quotation is taken.

You should find yourself seeing words and phrases taking form in the diagram; so you can work back and forth, from WORDS to diagram and from diagram to WORDS, until the diagram is filled in.

CLUES	WORDS
A. Sways; stuns; stones; ice	4 28 43 121 135
B. Greek philosopher (c. 495 B.C.–c. 435 B.C.)	137 146 176 186 202 14 34 60 78 89
C. Prince of Sais and Prince of Memphis; chief of the Egyptian delta lords (lived c. 633 B.C.)	91 115 138 156 171
D. "When I am not walking, I am reading; I cannot ___" (3 wds.; Lamb, *Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading*)	203 214 1 26 42 114 149 191 61 11 225
E. Pretentious, swaggering display of courage	64 79 106 164 189 39 52
F. *Syllogism in which one* premise is unexpressed	101 123 142 204 13 85 157 170 229
G. *Echoes back*	230 3 17 36 51 118 140 151 175 193 219 108
H. French composer (1818–93; *Romeo and Juliet*)	54 75 206 227 47 124
I. River of Southwest Asia, formed by the confluence of the Kara and the Murad	125 29 77 100 116 150 167 185 220
J. Russian pianist, conductor, and composer (1873–1943; "The Bells")	69 86 109 129 187 200 21 35 58 92 211
K. Banquet VIP	216 57 80 112 127 209 41 141 153 180 96
L. Peachy; crackerjack (comp.)	143 181 196 7 120 155 205 221 37 169
M. Huge, ponderous	173 223 5 32 55 90 103 183 226 46 10
N. Frankly	22 38 84 163 113 228 9 192
O. Loosen; relax; open	53 111 174 224 16 134 197 213
P. Timber wolves of the western United States	107 132 178 210 31
Q. *Anatole France novel*	63 94 117 130 148
R. Third movement of Grofé's *Grand Canyon Suite* (3 wds.)	70 145 190 25 44 66 126 161 18 119
S. Evil spirits	15 82 95 199 19 160
T. Body of water linked with the River Clyde by the Clyde Canal (4 wds.)	12 50 23 98 104 159 67 194 76 59 182 147 172 27 184
U. Thorny issue; touchy subject, one hard to handle (2 wds.)	68 83 99 136 217 93 165 24 110
V. Socialist candidate for president in 1900, 1904, 1908, 1912, and 1920 (full name)	20 65 72 152 201 212 40 6 62 48 154 30 208 33 218 131
W. First earl of Chatham (1708–78), known as the Great Commoner (full name)	133 158 179 207 222 198 105 8 139 81 49
X. Italian volcanic island in the Tyrrhenian Sea, known as the Emerald Isle	88 166 56 2 122 177
Y. Gap or missing part, as in a manuscript, an argument, or the like	168 144 74 71 162 102
Z. Greek sculptor of Messene (second century B.C.)	45 195 215 97 188 73 128 87

Answer to ***Double-Crostic No. 141*** appears on page 42.

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On Forgiveness

"The joy has gone out of American politics now. We have moralists and managers. The standard stump speech emphasizes sacrifices and 'trade-offs' rather than new programs and dreams."

AT A DINNER PARTY on the night after Senator Humphrey's memorial service in Washington, an acquaintance was complaining: "All those eulogies infuriate me. The fact is that when it came to the big issue, Humphrey blew it. Maybe his reason for not speaking out about Vietnam was mistaken loyalty to Johnson. Or maybe his appetite for the presidency blinded him. The reason doesn't much matter. What matters is the fact. His big moment came, Humphrey was tried and found wanting. It's insulting to our memories and to history to forget that."

The other controversy at dinner concerned President Nixon's decision to end his voluntary exile and to return to Washington for the Humphrey services. "Tasteless!" said one diner, disgusted. "Appropriate," said another, adding that the only tasteless moment was when the TV cameras editorialized on St. Francis' prayer, "in pardoning we are pardoned," by focusing on the former president. A third diner was not prepared to countenance a Nixon return under any circumstances. "I'm so suspicious of that man," she shuddered, "that I *knew* he was staging a comeback."

The debates on both questions were quickly abandoned as fruitless. Minds would not be changed. A villain, whether dead or powerless, was still a villain. Time's healing powers were working slowly, if at all.

And was that good or bad?

The summer of the Watergate hearings, I was living and working in a small, antique Umbrian hill town named Spoleto. Each afternoon at four, I would run to the town's one "international" newsstand to secure a rare copy of the day-old *International Herald Tribune*, then sit at the Bar Casino devouring a *granita di caffè con panna* (sweet frozen espresso with an unconscionably creamy cream topping) and the news. My Spoletino friends found my absorption comical. What was the big deal about "Vatergate"? they wanted to know. A little lying, bribing, bugging? The disgrace of a president? The stones of these steep streets could remember dozens of tyrants over the centuries, more venal and conniving. Even by comparison with their own not-so-corrupt ruling gang—and the Spoletini had no doubt that, exposed or not, this corruption existed—Signor Nixon's crookedness seemed small-time.

My Italian was never fluent enough for me to explain. And frankly, in the shade of all those long-memoried palazzi, I almost shared their cynical, good-natured, forgiving fatalism. What difference did it make, after all—a president more or less. For that matter, what difference did any failure make? Phones broke, newspapers weren't delivered, new rascals threw old rascals out, and if you troubled yourself to lift a stone, you would find worms. Life, in any case, would go on, and given the individual's inability to really effect any changes in things, it was best to relax and enjoy.

We Americans, having a much higher regard for our power to shape the future, take ourselves more seriously. Ever since we began this democratic experiment with brash assertions of man's equality and his right to happiness, we have considered ourselves a model, moral and political, and we react angrily to any imputations of failure, like teacher's pets who get caught for not doing their homework. We try harder. We feel our extra effort entitles us to more respect. And we are aggrieved that few other nations share our high opinion of ourselves.

Over the past three decades, we have had to learn to cope psychologically with the possibility of failure, and we do not like it. We were stubborn in Korea, stubborn in Vietnam, and are being absurdly stubborn about Panama. By treating Nixon like a leper, we have tried to reassure ourselves that he is not really one of us, but an aberration, a thalidomide baby. When candidate Humphrey reinjected the word "joy" into politics in 1968, he was trying to recall us to our optimism, our once buoyant belief that we *could* make the world better, yes indeed! if we only tried.

The joy has gone out of American politics now. We have moralists and managers. The standard stump speech emphasizes sacrifices and "trade-offs" rather than new programs and dreams. We react sourly to the politicians we hold responsible for the theft of joy—Johnson, the Nixon gang—and nostalgically to the politicians who seem to embody the dream—the assassinated Kennedys and good old Hubert. The impressive outpouring of grief at Humphrey's death was as much for the attitude he represented as for the man. We knew, somehow, that we would not soon again encounter a politician who could say that yes, by golly, he'd *like* to be president, not because he wanted to restore rectitude or to solve problems, but because it would be fun.

Humphrey was a relic from America's adolescence. So is Nixon, with his grim, tenacious confidence in his own and his country's capacity to get things done. We have now entered into our doubtful, apologetic maturity. We are embarrassed by our power, eager to work our way back into the nations' graces with kowtowing, concessions, self-restraint. We are less anti-socialist because we are no longer as confidently pro-capitalist. We doubt our ability to effect change, as individuals and as a nation. Voting has become more duty than privilege. We tend to be more forgiving, feeling the need to be forgiven.

Thus, the show of unforgiveness at that dinner party, the adamant refusal to exculpate the dead or to pardon in our hearts a disgraced and broken man, seems to me, on the whole, good evidence that we have not yet declined into the luxurious decrepitude of not caring. Sure, there have been scoundrels and blunderers in the past, and there will be in the future. But this is now, and America, however humbled, is *still* a model, and every scoundrel and mistake still matter. —CARLL TUCKER

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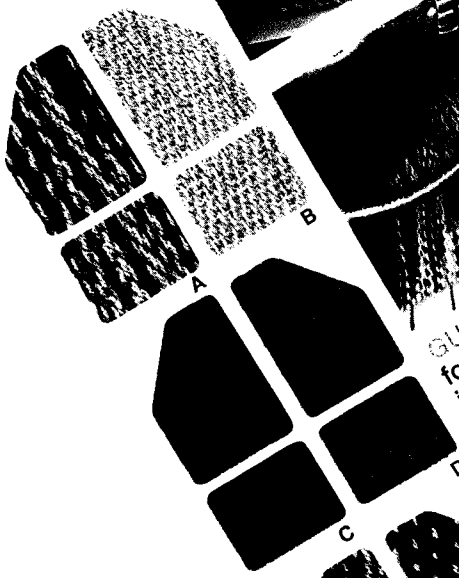

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